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THE  
**SPIRITUAL MUSTARD POT:**

CONTAINING  
**A DEMONSTRATION OF THE EXISTENCE  
OF GOD.**

**ANSWERS**  
TO THREE OBJECTIONS  
TO THE  
DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES.

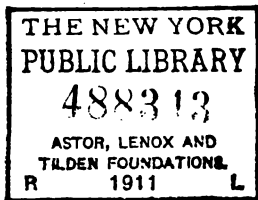
AND,  
**AN ESSAY**  
*ON THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION,*

—  
BY JOHN COGITANS.  
—

To the Christian Philosopher, all things are consistent  
and clear.—*Southey.*

PRINTED AT TROY, N. Y.

.....  
1824.



*Northern District of New-York*, to wit :

{ L. S. }

**B**E IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighteenth day of October, in the forty-ninth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1824, Noah Harrison, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit :—

“ The Spiritual Mustard Pot: containing a demonstration of the existence of God. Answers to three objections to the divine origin of the scriptures. And an essay on the origin of Religion.— By John Cogitans. To the christian philosopher, all things are consistent and clear.—*Southey.*”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “ An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned.” And also, to the act entitled “ An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned, extending the benefits thereof to the arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching historical and other prints.”

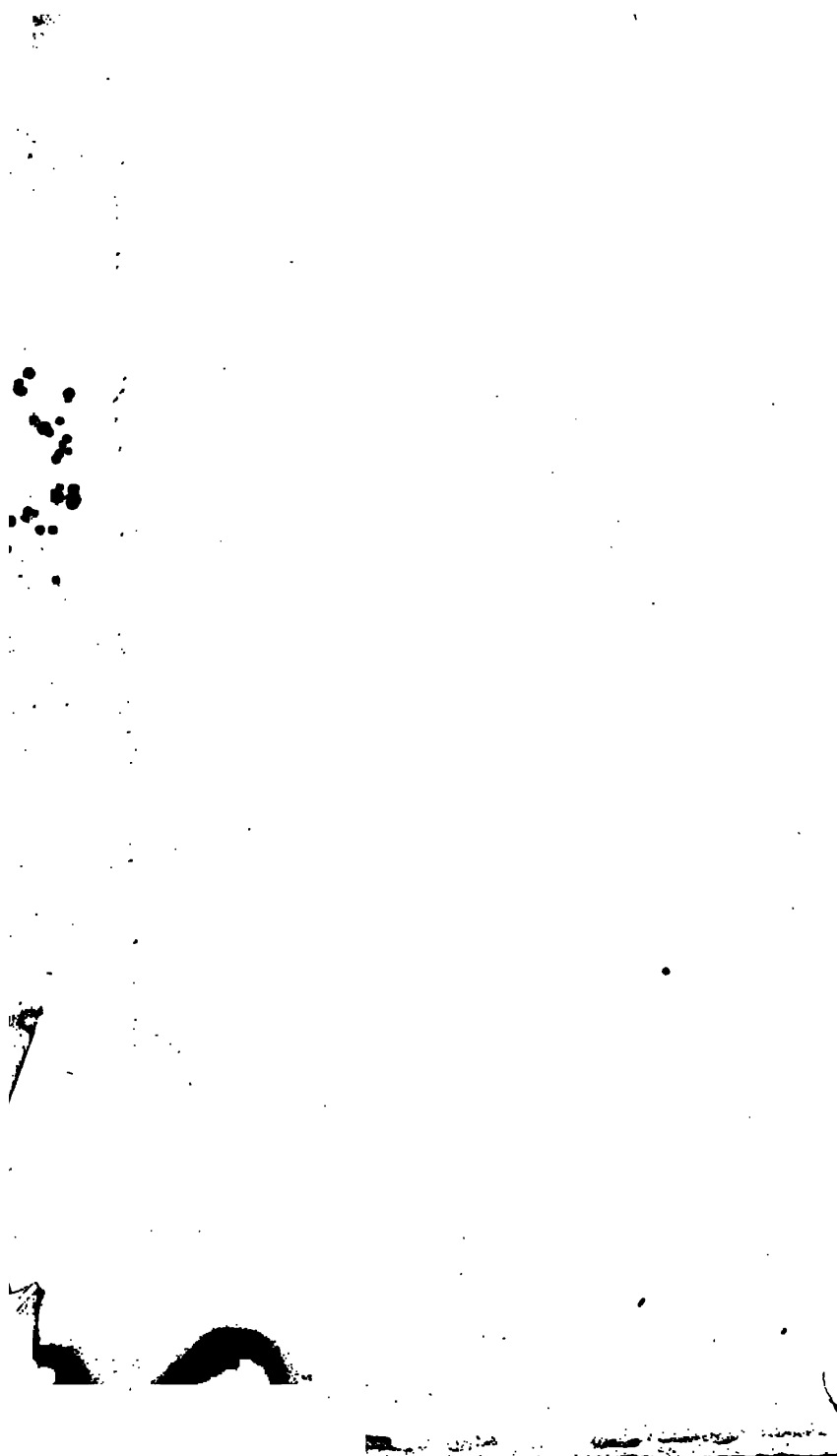
R. R. LANSING, *Clerk*  
of the *Northern District of New-York.*

## ***ADVERTISEMENT.***

A SECOND, and perhaps a third, volume will, as is intended, be added to this work ; but several years may elapse before their publication. I am aware that many errors, in the style of this volume, might be corrected by a thorough revision, but as I have no more time to spend upon it, it must go before the public, such as it is.

December 1, 1824.

1861 Nov 27 1910



## INTRODUCTION.

### *PART FIRST.*

THE American people have arrived at such a degree of freedom, prosperity, and happiness, that there is danger that they will forget their God. This fate is the more to be deplored, because as God has given them the fortune, (would that I could call it good,) to drink deeper than others of the bliss of this world, he will require from them the greater gratitude and worship. Though unfortunately he may expect that the gratitude of man, instead of being elevated by prosperity, will diminish as his happiness increases. Where much is given, much will be required in return ; but there shall little be received. The miserable cry to God for assistance, in humble and acceptable prayer ; but the happy do not thank him for the prosperity which he has granted. So great is the perversity of the human mind, so liable is man to be turned by pride from the path of reason and duty, and to forget the Being to whom he owes his life, and the happiness which he enjoys.

For these reasons, freedom and peace, which always lead to the prosperity of the people that possess them, the greatest blessings which man can desire, when this world alone is regarded, become exceedingly danger-

ous to his future state. Peace diminishes our devotion to God, by the prosperity it produces ; but freedom has a two-fold injurious effect upon religion. It invites a spirit of enquiry exceedingly dangerous to Christianity ; for man will not receive opinions, from a reliance on the assertions of others, when he has the liberty and means of examining them himself. Where the press is free, infidel publications will abound ; and many will be led astray, if not eternally lost, by the delusive arguments of the enemies of God. It will be objected to this assertion, that reason is the support of our religion, and that the more it is examined, the clearer its truth will appear. But this is encouraging the pious with false hopes. Though Christianity is supported by reason, reason, when not carried to its fullest extent, has produced, and will produce, many infidels. The objections to our holy religion, are much easier to be perceived than the answers to them. Some arguments (false and fallacious indeed) have been advanced, which the Christians to this day have been unable to refute ; and which must, beyond a doubt, have a lamentable effect on the minds of the people. Some of those, I trust, I shall be able to destroy, in the following work ; and others, with which I should be unable to contend, may be annihilated by future Christians ; yet many will remain as snares for the wavering. The doctrine of Mr. Hume, that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, is one which I should be happy to destroy, were my powers

sufficient to secure such a victory. But I feel myself unable to attempt such a task, and must therefore leave it to some more powerful hand, trusting in God that he will secure the triumph of his cause. Other infidels too, have left the field of action in triumph. If the task then of defending Christianity be so great, and the labor of finding fault so easy, that objections may be raised faster than answers can be devised, if arguments have already been advanced, which have not been, and cannot easily be, refuted, is not religion in danger where the press is free; where these arguments may, without penalty, be laid before a people, whose curiosity is excited by an unexampled liberty of enquiry. If Christianity cannot be thus destroyed, many souls must be lost. Whatever benefits the freedom of the press may have, it must be allowed to produce effects exceedingly dangerous to the future state of man.

The other injurious effect of freedom, on religion, arises from the increased prosperity and happiness which it produces. That these are increased by freedom, I need not attempt to prove, for it can be doubted by no American. That they are injurious to religion is little less manifest, though not so generally acknowledged. Misery, want, and afflictions, teach us to depend on God, to abhor our present life, and to look forward to a better world; while prosperity and abundance instil into our minds a love for our present state, and induce us to forget that being from whom all

good things are received. The danger of death carries our thoughts forward to the world beyond the tomb, and teaches us that we should every moment be prepared; while security induces us to put off our repentance to the twelfth hour of the day. Poverty teaches us, that we are not to look for happiness in this life; while riches causes us to believe, that God cannot make us know want. "It is easier," said our Saviour, "for a camel to pass a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." So difficult is it for human nature to renounce the love of this world, except, when driven to it by poverty and wretchedness.

All wise Christians have considered sickness as the greatest enemy of infidelity, and happiness as its greatest friend. Those, who, in health and prosperity, have insulted the majesty of God, and doubted his existence, are, (as we are told,) ever ready to call on his name, when overcome by sickness and afflictions. The righteous, says Christ, have many afflictions; how then may we expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven, if we are not afflicted; since no room, except for the righteous, can be found in that holy place. But in a land of liberty, afflictions are so few, that the souls of many must be lost, through the excess of earthly bliss. When I reflect upon these things, I am indeed unable to admire, or commend, the design of those, whose labours, guided by a false spirit of benevolence and patriotism, have brought our country to its present

condition. In a land of despotism, where men see their fellow beings, hourly falling the victims of pretended justice, where every one knows that he is not a moment secure, against the halter or the axe, all will hasten to prepare for death ; but in a land where none but the guilty are punished, security will induce men to delay the work of their salvation. In a land, where the government crushes the people to misery, and slavery, they will loathe their present existence ; but an American, like the conqueror of Troy, must be so enamoured of life, that he would prefer the meanest stations of his country, to the joys of the Elysian fields, or of the Christian heaven. In a land, where heresy and scepticism in religion, are punished with death, the people will believe, that, that religion must be true, which it is so criminal to doubt ; but in a land, where all opinions are esteemed equally meritorious, where all may lay before the people, without danger of punishment, arguments against the cause of Christ, many enemies cannot fail to rise up against it. Can we then esteem our state of freedom more desirable than that of despotism.

Christians have used *fasts* and *flagellations* (as substitutes for involuntary afflictions) to teach them their dependance on God, and the evils of this life. But a voluntary fast, whatever beneficial effects it may produce, can never be so useful, or conduce so much to the purpose for which it was instituted, as one which we have not the power to prevent. The object of

fasts, which is to make us feel our dependence on God for food, cannot be completely attained, when the person who subjects himself to them knows that he can end them at pleasure. The inconvenience which he may feel, the craving of his appetite, in such a case, may give him a lively sense of the condition to which he would be reduced, should God cease to supply him with food; but it can give him no evidence, beyond what he before possessed, of the power of God to reduce him to this condition, or that his sustenance is derived from the Deity. He will feel a full sense of the horrors of want, but he will regard the danger of its falling to his lot, as too remote to be noticed. But, the person who fasts for want of food, will be led to reflect, and to meditate, in a manner exceeding different, and much more agreeable to God. He will feel, not only the inconvenience of want, but the danger of its existence. So far will he be from feeling independent of divine aid, that he will trust only to his prayers, and to the goodness of God, for the means of sustaining his life. Such a man will naturally look to God for assistance, while the other will look only to the end of his appointed fast. This, however, is not said as an objection to voluntary fasts, which the righteous have instituted, only because, they are convinced by long experience, of their utility; but I must assert, that the beneficial influence of those fasts, bears no comparison to that of those which arise from want, and that they are not, therefore, an adequate substitute for

the latter, and that they ought not to be considered as such. But, if their benefits are not so great as could be wished, it by no means follows, that they should be discontinued or despised; especially when those more beneficial are not always to be obtained.

The object of flagellation, is to mortify the flesh and to disgust the soul with earth, but if the sufferer knows that he could be happy if he would, if he is certain that his pain must cease when he ceases to inflict the blows, which he is not compelled to strike, the desired effect can be produced but in a very imperfect degree. No person, however great his pains may be, can impute them to the imperfections of the world in which he lives, or abhor his life on their account, when he inflicts them himself. But if the blows were struck by an arm that was not governed by the sufferer, if he knew not the termination of his pangs, if he was obliged to attribute them, not to his own act, but to the state of the world in which he was placed, he would soon loathe his existence, and the most salutary effects would be produced. It is manifest, therefore, that afflictions, to be useful, should be beyond our controul. Let us then never attempt to diminish the evils to which flesh is heir, with a hope of supplying their place with voluntary sufferings, but let us rather attempt to increase the afflictions which men are born to endure, in this life, that we may secure their happiness in the world to come.

We cannot fail to adore the wisdom of God, when

we perceive that the religion which he has established, naturally produces and carries with it the evils, which are so essential to its existence. We must consider that religion as the work of divine wisdom, which is so calculated, that whenever a people are converted to its doctrines, it is supported among them by the evils which it produces. Such a religion is Christianity.—Wherever it is received, contentions and tyranny, its usual attendants, turn the minds of men to a better world, by the evils they produce in this. Man is made to know his dependence on God, by the wants and pains which he is made to endure, and warned to be prepared for his future state by the dangers which forever threaten his life ; and when he is thus prepared for the world to come, the axe and the gibbet, are ready to send him thither. But, it will perhaps be said by the enemies of our religion, that it does produce those salutary effects ; and there are several reasons which, at first view, might induce us to adopt their opinion ; but these vanish on a closer scrutiny.

There are many moral precepts in the Gospel, which at first view appear excellent, and which are in truth not bad. Christians too have taught that morals are necessary to salvation. These facts have induced many to believe, that the religion of Christ, must have a beneficial effect on morals, and, therefore, add to the happiness of man. But a further examination, will teach us, that while it appears to make men more moral, by giving them new motives for being virtuous, it

has injured virtue by placing it on a false foundation and by making obedience to the will of God, and not the happiness of man, its object. It is from this that it happens, that Christians have frequently engaged in pernicious acts, thinking that they were governed by a regard for virtue alone, and that, what they did, was required of them by their duty to God. But, if Christians should never mistake the nature, and the commands of virtue, the effect of their religion on morals would not be great, because the motives which it gives man, for being virtuous, do not extend to all. The unregenerate believer in Christianity, has no more to fear, in regard to his future state, if he is a criminal, than if he is virtuous. If he dies unchanged, he knows that he is lost, whether he is guilty or innocent of any offence against morals. If he should have the good fortune to be born again, his crimes will be forgiven, and experience must teach him, that criminals are more frequently the subjects of divine grace, than those whose characters are unimpeached. What motive then has he for being virtuous, more than if he knew this world was his last. Nor are the motives which religion gives to the converted for adhering to virtue, of the strongest kind, for with them a crime, if duly repented of, is esteemed no damning thing.

Religion diminishes the happiness of man, by placing, as I have said, virtue on a false foundation, or rather, by establishing principles of virtue, which are hostile to the temporal interest of man. It appears

to be a maxim, derived from the nature of religion, that our spiritual welfare should be preferred to our temporal, that the good of this life should be despised, when injurious to that of the life to come. But a man, with such principles as these, cannot obtain so much happiness himself, nor will he impart so much to others, as if he thought this life the only one, in which, he was to look for bliss. If he imagines the happiness of the present world to be unimportant to himself, he will not search for it, and therefore will not obtain it. If he imagines it unnecessary to others, he will neither assist them, nor sympathise with them, in their pursuit of it. If he imagines that his happiness in this life, is detrimental to that of the next, he will endeavour to overcome his passion for the former, and will live in a perpetual warfare, between the desires which he deems conflicting, of happiness in this world, and of salvation in the world to come. If he believes that others, in their pursuit of terrestrial pleasures, are neglecting their eternal interests, he will endeavour, as much as in him lies, to defeat their purposes, and to destroy their hopes of bliss. In these labors, he will be governed by the pious and benevolent desire, of making men happy in a future world, at the expense of their peace in this. In favor of this purpose he will spare the infliction of no evil. It will be in vain to tell him, that he is not interested in the future welfare of others, for he will be well aware that he is as little interested in their welfare on earth ; and if it was said,

that he would not feel the punishment that would be inflicted on the wicked, in the world to come, should he leave them to their fate, he might reply, that he felt not the evils which he inflicted on them in this.—Such would be the conduct of a man with the principles I have mentioned, for such conduct would be required by the spiritual interest of mankind, which is ever at war with their temporal good.

But these principles have a much more pernicious effect, on our temporal welfare, when adopted by governments. The spiritual interest of a people, which must be the first consulted by every Christian government, is ever opposed to their freedom. The spiritual interest of a nation, the adoption of which will be esteemed by Christians as the highest virtue, requires that infidels and heretics should be persecuted, that the freedom of the press should be proscribed, lest false doctrines should be communicated to the people. It is in vain to say, that punishment cannot convince a man, that it can only make him a hypocrite, for the punishment is not intended for his good alone, but to prevent the spreading of his errors among others, for which purpose it answers well. For, though a man's opinion, when once fixed, cannot be changed by punishment, it may prevent him from communicating his doctrines to others, and by the odium which it throws upon his opinions, it may put them forever at rest. The effect, which these persecutions have on the religious opinions of a people, may be readily per-

ceived, if we enquire, why as great a proportion of the inhabitants of Turkey are not Christians, as of the inhabitants of England and France. Every one knows that this difference is occasioned by the persecutions which Christians are obliged to endure in the former country, and by those which are inflicted on their enemies in the others. But this effect could not be produced, if persecution and intolerance availed nothing. Why are the inhabitants of Spain all Catholics, while but few of them are found in England and Germany? Because their enemies are punished in the former nation, but supported by the laws of the others. Why have the people of the same country, been in one age all orthodox—in the other all heretics? Because in the one age the heretics were condemned, and proscribed by the laws, while in the next the saints were most unrighteously persecuted. Who then can say, that religious persecutions tend only to make hypocrites and martyrs; or that they are not competent to change the faith of a people? It being manifest, that persecutions will prevent changes, in the religious sentiments of the people, religious governments will not fail to adopt them in regulating the opinions of their subjects, and in bringing them to one common standard; to the great advantage of the spiritual, but to the great detriment of the temporal interest of the nation. It will be said in vain, that the government may be wrong as well as individuals, and that while it is attempting to exterminate heresy, it may be persecuting the true

faith. This might be a good argument with a superior power, uninterested in the contest, for leaving each party to enjoy its own opinion, but when the rulers of a nation are composed of sectarians, they must believe that their own opinions are correct, and will, therefore, persecute those who differ from them. It will be impossible to convince them, that the interest of their country requires moderation. The spiritual interest of the people will, at least, afford them a pretence, and sectarian rage a motive, for inflicting the severest and most ignominious punishments, on those whom they may brand with the name of the enemies of God. Emboldened by despair, the persecuted will arise against their oppressors, the country will be distracted by civil wars, and the victims of the victorious party will be daily led to the stake.

Nor can it be said with truth that these evils arise only from the abuse of Christianity. They arise from the spirit of that religion. They arise from the maxim, that the good of this life must be sacrificed to that of the life to come ; from the hatred which a Christian always feels for those who differ with him in opinion ; from the strength, which a sect may gain, by the persecution of its enemies ; and from the belief of the Christians, that the course most agreeable to virtue and to God, is to persecute with fire and sword, those whose faith is disapproved by him. These causes of persecution are inseparable from Christianity, and the evils which they produce, must always exist where

that religion prevails. While any one sect has strength sufficient to persecute the others, and there are others for it to persecute. When a people are not looking for happiness in this world, we are not to wonder if they do not find it here, and when a government attempts to deceive and oppress the people by religious maxims, their condition is miserable indeed.

But the persecution of their own subjects is not sufficient for Christian governments. They must have crusades against heretical and unbelieving nations. In these wars too, in which thousands will be destroyed, and whole provinces desolated, the welfare of the souls of men will alone be regarded. Slavery or death will be the usual fate of the captives, at least, the necessary horrors of war will be increased. But I hear some one say, that these effects do not naturally arise from the religion of Christ, but only from its abuse. I answer, that as the cause of any religion may be benefited by religious wars, and as the partizans of all religions, think it their duty to promulgate their doctrines, as far as in them lies, whether it be by fire and sword, by eloquence, by arguments, or by pious frauds, such wars will always arise from the existence of hostile creeds, when any one religion can hope to gain ground by the contest. Admitting a religion to be true, and to be known to be true, (and this the votaries of any will admit,) the purpose of extending it throughout the earth, will justify the perpetration of many atrocious acts, and the production of many evils. If we admit

that the Christian religion is true, beyond a doubt, and that the Mahometan is as certainly false, the crusades of the Christians, against the partizans of the latter, can be easily justified. The crusaders had a high prospect of conquering a part, if not the whole, of the empire of the Saracens, and of reducing it to the worship of Christ. It will be said, that as the worship of the conquered, would be but a forced acquiescence in the truth of Christianity, it would not be acceptable to God. This would be true of those persons who existed at the time of the conquest, but it would not be true of their descendants ; or if they would have inculcated their doctrines on their children, their whole race might have been exterminated, and their country re-peopled with Christians. Had this been done, fifty millions of sinners would have been destroyed, but as many had been added to the number of the saints, for every generation, in succeeding ages, till the end of the world should arrive. The Christians actually possessed themselves of territory sufficient, as is estimated, to support twenty millions of inhabitants. The re-conquest of this territory, was an event which they could not have anticipated. If it had remained in the hands of the Christians, twenty millions had been gathered, from that region in every age, which, allowing twenty-five ages to the present time, had now amounted to five hundred millions of souls. No one, who believes the truth of our religion, can believe, that the salvation of these, would not have repaid, ten thousand

times, the evils of the wars which made them Christians. None can, in fact, reject our conclusion, except those who believe that the Christian and Mahometan religions have an equal chance of truth, and to such, the Christian can address no argument. We must conclude, therefore, that the injury which Christianity does to our temporal interest, by placing virtue on a false foundation, and by inducing a man to prefer the spiritual to the temporal interest of his neighbor, and governments to prefer the spiritual to the temporal interest of their people, is greater than the benefits which it confers on mankind, by giving them additional motives for being virtuous. But there are still other evils which it produces. It enables impostors, who will abuse their power, to deceive the people, and to advance themselves to the highest grandeur. It assists tyrants to sit securely on their thrones, and to oppress their people with impunity, by denouncing those who may rise up against them, as the enemies of God. The factious make it the instrument of destruction, to the best of governments, by accusing their rulers of impiety, and by asserting that religion is in danger.—By conferring power on the clergy, it raises in the midst of the state, a class of men whose interest is in direct opposition to that of the people, by the deception of whom their authority is maintained, and at whose expense their luxury is supplied. These evils will not be remedied by providing that the church and state shall never be united; for the clergy will ever

control the laws, when the rulers are religious. Nor is it sufficient to enact that the clergy shall possess no authority over the people; for they will always be powerful, while they are believed to possess the keys of heaven, and while they are powerful they will be dangerous. Wherever the people are religious, and united in their religion, the clergy will abuse them: they support the power of those tyrants who favor their cause, by the reverence which the people pay to their doctrine, but will use their religion as the means of destroying those rulers who may provoke their wrath.

But how is it, I shall be asked, that the United States, a Christian nation, possesses a prosperity so dangerous, if the Christian religion is so hostile to our welfare on earth. I answer, the deplorable divisions, which exist among Christians, particularly in this nation, have, in a great measure, prevented the evils which that religion naturally produces. Persecution has ceased, because Christians divided into so many sects, that none is sufficiently strong to contend with the united power of the others, have found it necessary to live in peace with one another. Consisting mostly of sects which have once been persecuted, and have therefore condemned persecutions, they are not willing, immediately, to belie their own doctrines. The number of citizens who are less anxious for the cause of religion, than for the welfare and grandeur of the republic, who are nevertheless loved and honored by the people, has

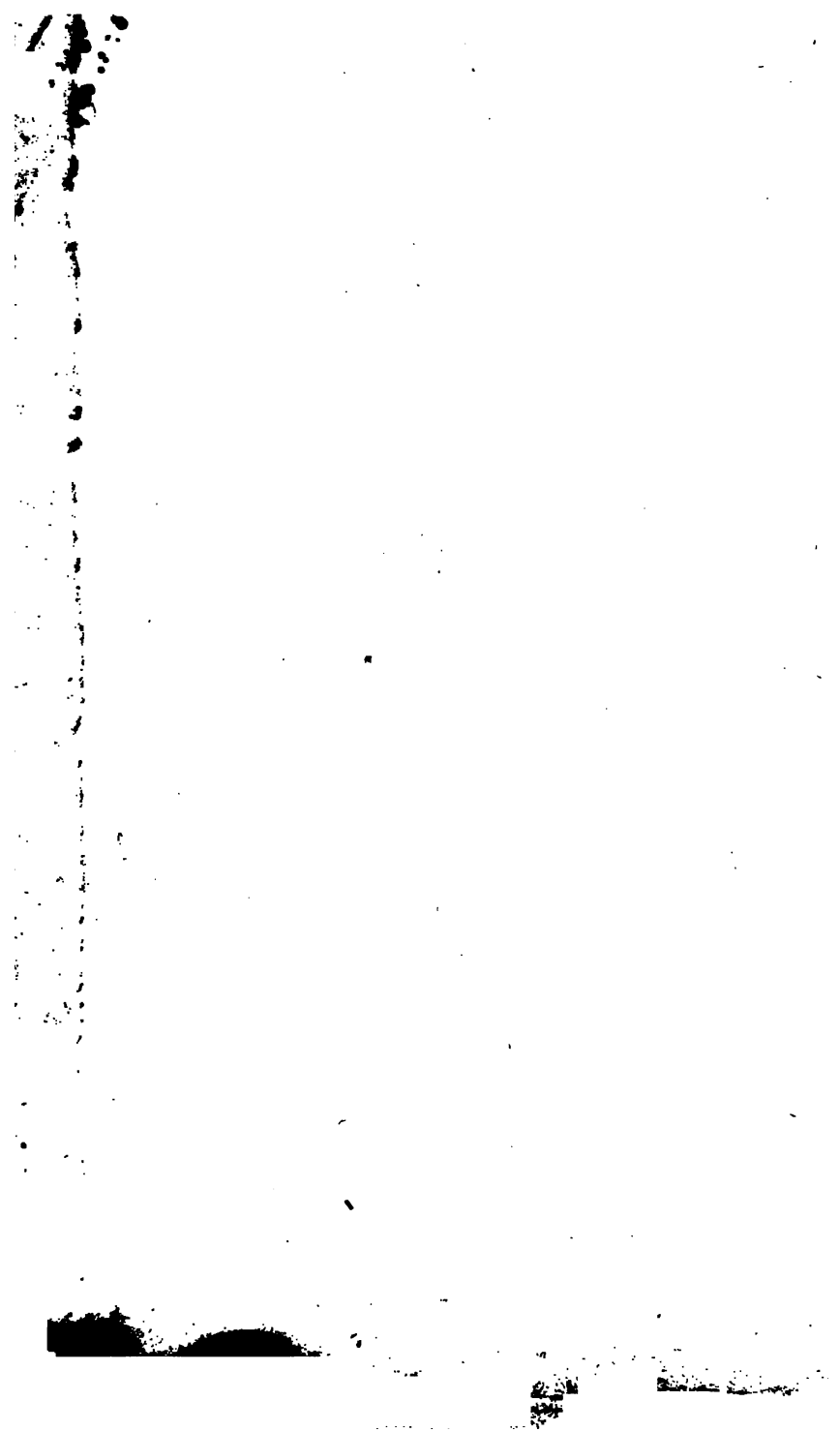
confined the advocates of our spiritual interest, within those bounds which are consistent with our temporal good ; and a constitution, well calculated to promote our happiness on earth, has rendered religious intolerance impossible, without the most perfect union among Christians. The open abuses of religion, has in a great measure ceased, because the different sects, acting as censors upon one another, are ever ready to expose the faults of their enemies, and to refute the doctrines by which they hope to impose upon the people.\* The clergy find it impossible to change the established government by their machinations, and the state of the republic is such, that they can have little influence upon its rules. These causes, joined with the freedom which we possess, have produced the prosperity of which I complain.

The danger which arises to our religion from this prosperity, and from the freedom of enquiry and examination which is here allowed to all, has induced me to attempt the following work, with the hope of adding something to the security of Christianity. I am sensible that my talents are incompetent to the task I have

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\* Whenever a new sect arises, it will endeavor to strengthen itself, by opposing the pernicious custom and doctrines of those which existed before it. It was this that led the Christians to oppose the shows of gladiators, and the Protestants to contend with the absurd and pernicious doctrines of the Catholics. The same cause has induced the different sects of Protestants to expose the absurdities of one another.

undertaken ; but I labor in a cause to which I shall be proud to have contributed but a little, and to promote the success of which, I should feel myself inexcusable, if I did not contribute all in my power..



## INTRODUCTION.

### *PART SECOND.*

#### A DISSERTATION ON THE MANNER OF DEMONSTRATING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

IN demonstrating the existence of God, or the truth of any proposition, we must begin with some principle, not established by argument, but believed by all mankind, not because it is proved to them to be true, but, because they are compelled by nature to believe it. In every demonstration, we prove the truth of some proposition, from others before known. In our first demonstrations, therefore, the propositions employed as premisses, cannot be established by arguments; for if they were, we must necessarily demonstrate something, before any thing could be demonstrated. If every proposition was to be proved, before it could be admitted to be true, philosophers would be much in the same situation in which litigants would find themselves, if it was a rule of the court, that the character of every witness, whether brought to establish facts, or the character of other witnesses, should be proved to be good, by the evidence of others, before his testimony could be admitted.

The labors of Reid render it unnecessary for me

to spend further time, in proof of the principles here advanced. It is now almost universally acknowledged, that there must be some such first principles of belief, or maxims of common sense, which are not believed, because proved by any argument that can be given for their truth, but, from an irresistible impulse of nature, which compels the assent of all. We can give no reason for the existence of this disposition of our nature ; we are acquainted with the fact, that we are thus constituted, but why we know not, except that it was the will of him who made us. Though nearly all, as I have said, are agreed, as to the existence of such principles, much doubt remains, in regard to the propositions and maxims which should be admitted as such. Some philosophers have given us a long list of such principles, which, according to them, it is impossible for us to doubt ; while others would restrict their number to a belief in the testimony of our memories,\* and a belief that the laws of nature will continue the same in future, that we have found them to be in time past. For the purpose of showing the true test of these first principles of natural belief, I would observe,

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\* This, however, is rather a consciousness, than a first principle of belief. Reid numbers consciousness among the first principles of belief, and asks, how a man knows, except by such a first principle, that he possesses those thoughts, of which he is conscious ?—It might as philosophically be asked, how he knows that he is conscious of possessing a thought. A thought and the consciousness of its existence, are in fact the same thing.

that there is no absurdity in supposing, (unless experience teaches the contrary,) that they are different in different men. It is possible, that one half of mankind should believe a proposition, through the impulse of nature, and that the rest, compelled by the same cause, should believe one contradictory to it. We know no reason why we should be thus compelled to believe one proposition sooner than another, except that we find by experience, that such is the case; and without that experience, therefore, we cannot know that those principles which we are thus compelled to believe without reason, are the same in all.\* It follows from this, that a first principle of belief which we are forced by our constitution to receive as true, may still be false; for if a proposition may be believed by one half of mankind, and one contradictory to it, by the other half, one part or the other must hold as a first principle, a proposition which is false; and if a false principle may be impressed by nature on one half of mankind, it may be thus impressed upon the whole. It is true, that if we are so constituted by nature, as to believe a proposition, no argument can convince us, that it is, or can be false; yet if there was one person, and only one, in the universe, upon whom this belief was not impressed by nature, the belief of the

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\* It appears, however, from an impartial view of mankind, that the first principles of belief are the same in all. This law is a remarkable instance of the harmony of nature.

rest of mankind, though it was impossible for them to doubt, would be no argument with him. If there was a person, not so constituted as to believe, that the laws of nature would continue the same in future, that he had found them to be in time past, or to trust any to such a supposition, our firm belief of this principle, would not convince him of its truth.

The use I intend to make of these remarks, is to show the method of determining what is a first principle of belief, and what is not. When men are led from experience, or any other cause, firmly to believe any proposition, they conjecture that it is a first principle; while they hold, that what is taught by nature or common sense, must necessarily be true, this conjecture strengthens their original belief, and is in its turn, strengthened by that belief. Thus one conclusion is made to support the other, till no doubt remains of the truth of either. Their belief of the truth of a proposition, convinces them that it is a first principle, this conviction confirms their belief of its truth. This false method of reasoning, has led to all the mistakes, which philosophers have made concerning first principles, and all the disputes which have arisen from them. It has introduced into philosophical works, propositions, pretended to be necessary truths, which are in fact, only the prejudices of mankind, or principles derived from experience, and extended beyond their proper limits. Philosophers, combating these false notions, have been branded as visionaries, and

mad men, where opinions were contrary to common sense, and with whom, therefore, no argument can be held.\*

But if men reflected, that a proposition might be false, whether its belief was impressed upon them by nature, or not, they would shun these errors; for they would finally bring themselves to doubt every thing which was not a first principle of belief, forced upon them by nature, or which was not proved by arguments based upon such first principles. Though we might for a time be led to believe propositions, which were neither maxims of common sense nor proved to be true, the constant reflection that they might be false, would in time lead us to reject them, while our opinions would remain unchanged, in regard to those principles, the belief of which is impressed upon us by nature, I would therefore advise that in our search after truth, we endeavor to doubt every proposition, as long as the possibility of a doubt remains; by so doing we shall shun most of our errors, but shall never be

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\* Reid and his followers assert, that no argument can be held with those who deny first principles. I answer that none can be held with those who adopt propositions as first principles, which are not such. I would lay it down as a general rule, that nothing should be received as a first principle, which had been doubted by any one, for I can easily conceive, that a man may bring himself to believe that to be a first principle which is not, but I cannot conceive how a man can doubt that, the truth of which, is impressed upon him by nature.

able to reject those principles which our constitution compels us to believe.

Having premised all that my purpose requires, on the nature of first principles, it remains for me to enquire, from which of these principles, the existence of God may be proved. The first that presents itself, is one that has been held absolutely indisputable, by most philosophers, viz : Nothing can begin to exist, or undergo any change, without a cause. To demonstrate the existence of God, from this principle, we must first prove, or take as granted, that the universe and human race have not eternally existed. I believe, that no conclusive demonstration of this can be given, because there are as many objections to the eternal existence of God, as to that of the universe. But if we should admit that he might have existed eternally, without any beginning or cause, I should not acknowledge that any proof of his existence could be derived from this source ; for I cannot believe that there is any first principle, the belief of which is impressed on mankind by nature, which teaches them, that nothing can begin to exist without a cause. It is now acknowledged, that we know nothing of the nature of the relation of cause and effect, in the physical world, nor any reason why such relation should exist, between different events. Thus we know no reason, except from experience, which has taught us that such is the law of nature, why motion should be communicated by impulse, why matter should be attracted by other bo-

dies or portions of matter, why sensations should be excited in our minds, by impressions on our organs of sense, or why the members of our bodies, should be subjected to the controul of our wills. Without experience we should not know on seeing one body impelled against another, that both would not rest in the place where they met, or that they would not pass through each other, without resistance. On seeing a stone placed in the air, we should not know that it would fall to the ground ; natural principles of belief would never teach us these facts. If then gravitation and impulse are the only causes of the motions which take place in these cases, the first principles contended for, can hardly be supported ; since the effect is produced, in both cases, by causes concerning which nature, as is acknowledged, gives us no information.—

But, says the metaphysician, there is another cause of these events ; the will of God, without which the impulse would have no effect, and the gravitation would not exist. This I am ready to admit, but it is not taught me by a first principle I do not know from nature, that the will of God should produce this effect sooner than impulse or gravitation ; nor is it easier for me to conceive, that a body of matter should begin to move when God wills, than it should when he wishes it to remain at rest. Independent of experience, we know no reason why the will of man should controul the motions of his own body, and independent of a demonstration, derived from other principles, we know

not, that the will of God should controul the motions of the universe, much less, that it should be sufficient to call that universe into existence, since no power, analogous to this, is possessed by man. To a person whose notions had not been fixed by the observations of nature, it would, I believe, be more difficult to conceive, that events should take place, and succeed one another, according to fixed and invariable laws, (without which there could be no such thing as the cause of relation and effect,) than to conceive them to take place without law or order of succession. We are told, that man cannot conceive that a thing should begin to exist without a cause; but I can as easily conceive that a world should spring into existence, without the will of God, or any other cause, as with it, and every one, who will examine his mind attentively, will, as I believe, find that he can do the same.

We may prove from the harmony of nature, by an argument amounting nearly to demonstration, that she has impressed on our minds no such principle of belief. The power which has produced us, has bestowed on us no members or organs, which are not necessary to our existence, or useful to the purposes for which we were created. Every part of our bodies is calculated to serve some end, either to increase our happiness, to guard against danger, or to assist in propagating our species. The same may be observed of the bodies of brutes, and the organs of vegetables, and the same order and harmony reigns throughout the u-

niverse. We may conclude, from these facts, that the same harmony extends to our minds, and that we possess no useless powers of intellect, or principles of belief. We should adopt nothing, therefore, as a first principle, which, if it existed, would neither regulate our actions, nor guide us in the search of truth.

Let us apply this rule, to the principle of which we have been speaking—Let it be admitted that nothing can begin to exist without a cause, and that this truth is so firmly impressed upon us, that we are unable to doubt it. Will this provision of nature answer any useful purpose? To this question I answer, that such a principle could never have any effect on our conduct, for in order to regulate our actions, according to the causes of things, we must know not only that events are usually preceded by causes, but what cause will produce any given effect, which we may wish should exist. If I know that an event must have a cause, but am ignorant as to what that cause is, the little knowledge which I have, can be applied to no use. If a man should firmly believe that corn would not spring out of the ground, without some cause, he would not think of sowing seed to produce this effect, if he had not been taught to do it by experience. A knowledge, therefore, that events were preceded by causes, could be of no service to us in directing our actions, until we had learned from experience, what these causes were. Nor would it avail us more in guiding our researches after truth. When we have

learned the existence of any event, we cannot, from this first principle, predict the existence of its effect ; we may conclude, that some other event, which has caused its existence, has preceded it ; but we cannot learn what that cause was. If we should find a man dead in the highway, we should know that there must have been some cause of his death, but we might as well ascribe it to the prick of a pin, as to the firing of a pistol. We might with as much reason, (whatever the circumstances might be,) ascribe it to an insect as to a man.

This first principle of belief, then, could be of no service to man, could have no effect on his thoughts or his actions, till he had learned from experience, what causes produced particular effects. But when this experience was gained, the natural instinct would be rendered unnecessary, by the knowledge which he must have gained. It is impossible that a man should obtain from experience, the knowledge of the cause of any event, without learning from the same source that this event always had a cause ; of course he would then have no occasion to be taught this by nature. It would be useless for him to know that an event must have a cause, until he knew what that cause was. The knowledge then which we are said to have derived from nature, must be learned from experience ; so fast as it becomes useful to us. We are not, therefore, to believe, that nature has impressed upon us a principle of belief, which would produce so little ef-

fect.\* If I believe that motion cannot begin to exist without a cause, my belief will be useless, until I learn from experience, what may produce it. If I have learned from experience, that the motion of a body may have been communicated to it by impulse from another body, I must have learned from the same experience, that such motion always has a cause. Why then should we suppose that nature would step in to our aid, where we have so little need of her assistance ; and where, if we had need, she could not assist us.

That such a first principle of belief could have no effect on our actions, may be infered, from the doctrines of those who support it. It is the opinion of these philosophers, that the will of an invisible being may be the cause of events, and some of them hold, that the will of such a being, is actually the efficient cause of all events, and that the laws of nature are only the general rules by which he governs the universe. According to this theory, though we may know that every event must have a cause, before we have obtained this knowledge from experience, yet we may take for its cause the will of a being, who, for aught we should know, might be of a fickle mind, and govern without rule or law. What would our state differ in

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\* This argument may also be applied to the principle, from which Mr. Paley, like most other philosophers, would demonstrate the existence of God.

this case, from one in which events took place without any cause.

Let us now attend to the arguments by which philosophers have endeavored to show, that such a first principle exists in our minds. The first of these is, that we cannot conceive a thing to begin to exist, without a cause. If by this be meant, (and I know not what else it can mean, since a cause which we cannot conceive, can have no effect on the mind, and could not, therefore, assist us in conceiving its effects,) that we cannot conceive the beginning of the existence of a thing, without conceiving a cause for its existence, it is not true; for there are effects, the causes of which not being perceptible by our senses, can never be conceived by us. Such are the effects produced by the will, either of man or of God. Things also begin to exist, when we can find no cause for their existence, and can therefore conceive none, though we can easily conceive the effect.

But the argument which requires most attention is derived from the fact that most men believe that nothing can begin to exist without a cause. To prove the existence of this belief Dr. Reid asserts that all men are governed in their actions by it. I will give the reader his own words—"A child," says he, "knows that when his top or any of his play things are taken away it must have been done by somebody." Perhaps it would not be difficult to persuade him that it

was done by some invisible being, but that it was done by nobody he cannot believe.

The Doctor is here mistaken. The child might be made to believe that it was done by an imaginary being, but it would be very "difficult to persuade him" that it was done by one that was invisible. Such a being would be nobody in the child's conception.

Suppose a man's house to be broken open, his money and jewels taken away. Such things have happened, times innumerable, without any apparent cause; and were he only to reason from experience in such a case, how must he behave. He must put in one scale the instances wherein a cause was found of such an event, and in the other scale, the instances wherein no cause was found, and the preponderant scale must determine whether it be most probable that there was a cause of this event, or that there was none. Would any man of common understanding have recourse to such an expedient to direct his judgment?

Suppose a man to be found dead on the highway, his skull fractured, his body pierced with deadly wounds, his watch and money carried off. The coroner's jury sits upon the body and the question is put, what was the cause of this man's death; was it accident, *felo de se*, or murder by persons unknown? Let us suppose an adept in Mr. Hume's philosophy to make one of the jury, and that he insists on the previous

question whether there was any cause of the event, or whether it happened without a cause.

Surely upon Mr. Hume's principles a great deal might be said upon this point, and if the matter is to be determined by past experience, it is dubious on which the weight of the argument might stand. But we may venture to say that if Mr. Hume had been of such a jury, he would have laid aside his philosophical principles, and acted according to the dictates of common prudence.

Let us grant Doctor Reid his first principle, and enquire in what manner the difficulties he finds in determining the cause of these events, will be remedied.— Though we may believe by nature that these things could not take place without a cause, he will not pretend that nature informs what those causes were. According to his own philosophy they might be caused by an invisible being, he seems, in part at least, to have adopted the hypothesis, that God is the cause of every thing, and that the physical causes, or those with which we are acquainted, such as impulse, impressions upon the organs of sense, and the like, do not necessarily produce the events that succeed them, but that they are connected with those events, only by the will and act of God. Admitting these principles to be correct, though we may know that a house cannot be broken open without a cause, we cannot know (without experience) that it was not occasioned by the will of "an invisible being." According to Mr. Stewart's

philosophy, it might have no physical cause.\* It might have been done by God, or by other spiritual powers, good or bad. How then should the owner proceed to judge whether this event had a cause perceptible to our senses, or not. He must throw into one scale the instances wherein such a cause had been found to such an event, and in the other the instances wherein no such cause could be discovered, and the preponderant scale must determine his judgment, whether the event had, or had not, any perceptible cause.

But let us proceed to the instance of a man found dead. Though we might agree that his death must have a cause, we could not know but that cause might have been God, the devil, sickness, or any event, trivial or important in appearance, visible or invisible.— Let the circumstances be what they would, we could, if destitute of experience, impute his death to no certain and particular cause, since any cause, that could be imagined, would be sufficient to account for it.— Suppose the circumstances to be such, as to give a suspicion of suicide, excepting that there was a difficulty in explaining the departure of the watch and money, Dr. Reid, if he was upon the jury, (having learned nothing to the contrary by experience,) might solve the doubt arising from this circumstance, by supposing that the soul had taken them off.

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\* See Stewart's Philosophy of Mind, chapter I. where the distinction between physical and efficient causes, is clearly explained.

But, says the Doctor, we cannot have obtained our belief of this principle from experience, because experience teaches only what is, and not what must necessarily be. This I admit—but when experience has shown that events are, in nearly all instances, preceded by causes, man, who, as Dr. Reid has proved by example, sometimes errs in logic, might be induced to believe that this must necessarily be the case. If Dr. Reid had possessed the knowledge of the human mind, which we might expect from his experience, he would have perceived, that it was natural for man, to mistake the conclusions which he has drawn from his early experience, for necessary truths. Take a man who, till his middle age, has never heard of the diurnal motion of the earth, and he will tell you, that if the world turned over, things would fall off when they were on the under side. Tell him that they would still tend towards the earth, he will deny it, and affirm that they must fall downwards, place them on which side of the earth you will. Ask him why they should fall downwards, sooner than upwards, he will tell you, not that he has learned by experience, that their tendency is to fall in the former direction, but that it is in the nature of things, and must necessarily be the case; nor will any reasoning persuade him to believe otherwise. Before the time of Copernicus, there were, I will venture to assert, more persons who believed that bodies must necessarily tend downwards, than there were who believed that nothing could be-

gin to exist without a cause. The first principles of the Peripetetics were nothing more than conclusions derived from experience. Thus having adopted the opinion, from the general appearance of things, that the earth was at rest, they were under the necessity of giving it a foundation, or of supposing that it did not gravitate. If they adopted the former supposition, the foundation which they gave it, would require another to support it; but if they adopted the latter, they deviated from experience, which taught them that all the substances of which the earth was composed, gravitated. To shun these difficulties they adopted the principle that bodies did not gravitate in their proper places, and supposed that the earth was in its proper place. Believing that the air had no weight, and finding that water would rise in a receiver, from which the air was exhausted, they adopted the first principle, that nature abhorred a vacuum. Another principle, from which I believe a demonstration of the existence of God has been attempted, is, that there can be no law without a law giver; from which it is inferred, that the laws of nature could not have existed, without the existence of a God, or a being of immense power, from whom they may be derived. I may be mistaken in believing, that there are any who suppose that the existence of God may be demonstrated from this principle, but if there are any such, a little reflection will convince them, that there can be no law given, without implying the previous existence of

a law. It is manifest that there can be no law giver, without power to establish his laws, and there can be no power without law. If God has power to create worlds, it must be a law, that the existence of a world shall always follow his wish for its existence. If he has power to establish such laws as he pleases, and impose them on nature, it must be a law, that whatever he wishes must be law. We have likewise been told, that there must be a God, because the order and regularity in the universe, must otherwise be attributed to chance. I answer, that there may be laws of nature, which necessarily produce that order and regularity. We may believe that there is no God, and still suppose that there are laws of nature according to which the earth was brought into, and is maintained in existence, with which we are unacquainted. These laws may be such as necessarily to produce regularity and order. In Chrystalization we see bodies arrange themselves into regular forms, such as might seem to be the products of art, through the unknown laws by which they are governed. If the existence of God could not be demonstrated from some other principles, we should not suppose it impossible, that the regularity of the universe was produced by laws similar to those.

But it will be said, perhaps, that the regularity of the laws themselves, if we admit such a supposition, must be attributed to chance, for we know no reason why they should be such as to produce regularity

sooner than confusion. To this I answer, that the difficulty will not be less if we admit the existence of God, for we know not why he should prefer order to confusion, and if his nature is such as to lead him to choose the former, this fact must be the result of chance, as much as the fact, that the laws of nature are such as to produce it. If you ask how nature or its laws chanced to produce regularity, may I not ask how the will and power, or rather the nature of God, chanced to be such as to produce the same; for if the laws of nature might have been such, as to produce confusion, there might have been the same imperfection in the laws of God's mind. If there be a thousand forms of disorder, to one of order, which the earth, springing into existence from the nature of things, might have assumed, there are as many of disorder, to one of order, in which God might have created it.

So much for the principles from which a demonstration of the existence of God has been attempted in vain. The only one, from which a full proof of his existence can be derived, is the one adopted by Mr. Paley, of which I shall have occasion to speak at some length, in the first part of this work.



# **SPIRITUAL MUSTARD POT :**

## *PART FIRST.*

### **A DEMONSTRATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.**

#### **CHAPTER I.**

#### **CONCERNING THE FIRST PRINCIPLE ON WHICH OUR DEMONSTRATION IS FOUNDED.**

MR. PALEY begins his demonstration of the existence of God, in the following manner :—

“In crossing a heath,” says he, “suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer, that for any thing that I knew, it had lain there forever ; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that for any thing I knew the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone. For this reason and for no other, viz : that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive, (what we could not discover in the stone,) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day ; that if the several parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a dif-

ferent size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none that would have answered the use that is now served by it.— This mechanism being observed, the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker; that there must have existed an artificer, who formed it for the purpose, which we find it actually to answer, who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.”

After some further remarks, Mr. Paley proceeds to prove, from the principles here laid down, the existence of God, or of a being who designed and created the universe. This he does, by proving that, throughout the works of nature, objects are adapted to the production of certain effects, for which they are evidently designed, that they are put together in the way, in which certain purposes may best be effected, in the same manner as the spring and wheels of the watch are put together, and adapted to the production of the motion desired; we must therefore conclude, that the universe was designed, and this adaptation of its parts produced, by an intelligent being. The Atheists attempt to destroy this conclusion by maintaining that we know and believe the watch to be the production of human invention, only from experience; that this experience cannot extend to the universe and its maker, God. They attempt to do away the effect of Mr Paley's assertion, that our conclusion would be the same though we had never seen a watch or a machine of a similar kind, by arguments which are not destitute of weight. These I shall lay before the reader, that I may not be accused of unfairness.

I. The Atheists assert that if we conclude from a first principle of belief impressed upon us by nature, that the watch was designed by an intelligent being, we ought to adopt the same conclusion concerning animals,

and vegetables. for they possess the same adaption of their parts to a manifest end, the preservation of their lives, and the propagation of their species. But do men unaccustomed to philosophical speculations adopt this opinion? The savage does not enquire who was the maker of the beast which he slays, though he may behold all the works of design, which its body contains. To this the Theists answer, that an animal is as much the product of contrivance as a watch, but that the animal was designed and created, by the creator of the universe; while the watch is the work of man. The Atheists ask in reply, why, if we suppose that animals and vegetables were created by God, we may not on finding a watch, assert that it was the work of the same being. In the case put by Mr. Paley, should any one assert that the watch had lain where it was found from the creation of the world, and that in the beginning it was created by God, he would find his opinion disregarded; no one would think its existence accounted for by being told that God might have imposed laws on metals and other matter, which by their operation had brought the various parts into their present form; though if we did not judge from experience, this would certainly be satisfactory.

II. The Atheists assert that there are two qualities which always distinguish the products of human invention from animals and vegetables, to wit: 1st. The government of their parts by the ordinary laws of nature; and, 2d. The dissimilarity between the matter of which they are composed, and the matter of living animals and vegetables. That there are three qualities which distinguish them from minerals, or fortuitous collections of matter, to wit: 1st. The capability of producing some effect, which is generally desired by man. 2d. A complicated adaptation of their parts to one another, by which certain motions are produced and communicated; which could rarely arise from chance, and without which the desired effect would

not take place. 3d. A form, shape and arrangement of their parts, which could not arise from the operation of the ordinary laws of nature. The two qualities, which separate them from animals and vegetables, belong to all machines and to no animal or vegetable ; we may therefore easily distinguish a machine (if we have any acquaintance with machines in general) though viewing it for the first time, from either of these. By examining a watch we shall find that the spring produces the motion by the operation of a law, by which all springs of the same metal and shape are governed. We shall also perceive that this law remains the same, whether the spring be connected with, or removed from the watch. But by examining the frame of an animal, we perceive that the heart is governed by a law, that ceases to exist, the moment it is removed from the body ; we find that the animal is governed by mind and will. If we examine a vegetable we find it governed by laws unknown to matter in its inorganic state ; we find too that the matter composing all animals and vegetables is much alike in appearance, but that it has no similarity to the matter of the machine before us. We may therefore conclude that this is neither an animal nor a vegetable.

But the qualities by which we distinguish machines from minerals, do sometimes belong, in an imperfect degree, to a mineral, and do not always all belong to the same machine. There is, therefore, more difficulty in distinguishing machines from minerals, than from animals and vegetables. A mineral may sometimes produce effects which are desired by man ; it may also be such in form as could not be produced by the operation of any law of nature, with which we are acquainted, and therefore be mistaken for the product of art ; a fortuitous collection of matter may also possess such a curious adaptation of its parts to one another, as would make us mistake it for the work of design.— The products of art too, may be so deficient in the or-

ordinary qualities of this class of objects, as to be mistaken for minerals. They may not produce any useful effect which we can discover; their construction may be simple, and their form such as matter thrown fortuitously together might assume; we are therefore to judge of the class to which objects belong, by the degree in which these qualities are possessed. But when we meet with an object, for the first time, that possesses all these qualities, very little experience is necessary to convince us that it is the work of man. There is sufficient analogy between a mill and a watch to induce us to place both in the same class.

III. When we meet with a machine, possessing all the qualities I have mentioned, we have less need of an extensive acquaintance with machines, to decide that it is the product of human invention, than of a knowledge of man, and of the laws of nature. If experience has given us this knowledge we know,

1st. That man exists.

2d. That he has power to contrive and create the machine under examination.

3d. That he has a motive for creating it.

4th. That the machine exists.

5th. That if it was not created by man, its existence could not be accounted for, in any way agreeably to the known laws of nature.

From these five facts we readily conclude that the machine was contrived by man, but when we attempt from the marks of design in the universe, to prove the existence of God, our reasoning is different.

1st. We know from observation that there exists an object, (the universe,) which bears a strong analogy to machines which are made by man, which nevertheless could not be created by him.

2d. That the existence of this object cannot be accounted for in any way agreeable to the known laws of nature.

From these facts we conclude :—

- 1st. That there exists a being possessing a mind analogous to man.
- 2d. That this being has power to contrive and create the universe.
- 3d. That he has a motive for creating it.
- 4th. That he did create it.

No one can doubt that this last argument is weak, compared with the first ; for in the first, we prove one new fact from five others previously known—in the last, we prove four new facts from two previously known.

But the Theists will not admit that this is a fair statement of the argument. They assert that our conclusion in this case is not founded on experience alone. It is a first principle, as they maintain, the belief of which is forced upon us by the author of our existence, that "arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to an use, in any thing that exists, imply the existence of intelligence and mind," by which the object possessing these qualities was designed and created. I shall not however further discuss the question, whether this is or is not a first principle, because if it is, the infidel will contend against it in vain ; and if it is not, we can, by our arguments, convince only those minds which are governed by prejudice alone. Those who reject it, may give up all enquiries concerning religion, for they reject the foundation on which it stands ; but to those who adopt it, I have a new demonstration of the existence of God founded upon it, to offer.

But I must first observe that, if this principle should be admitted, a consequence highly advantageous to Theism will follow, which nevertheless has not been noticed by Theists. It is, that the existence of God may be proved, not from an examination of one or a

few objects alone, but from any thing that exists.

Whatever exists must produce an effect of some kind on the universe.

It must also consist of an infinite number of parts. These parts must be put together, and arranged in some particular manner.

If this arrangement was different, the effect produced by the object, must be different. In every object, therefore, there must be an arrangement of parts, producing a particular effect, an adaptation of means to an end, a subserviency of instruments, (to wit, the parts,) to an use. From these facts, the existence of God inevitably follows.

In proving objects to have been contrived by man, we must confine our conclusion to those which produce effects desired by him. But no such restriction can be applied to our arguments for the existence of God, for we know not what effects are desired by that being. The existence of a stone may be of as much importance in his view as the existence of the human race. If it was admitted that the earth was created by God, we might perhaps infer, from certain marks which we behold in it, that the existence of man was desired by him; but this inference cannot be used in a demonstration of his existence, because it cannot be drawn, before his existence is proved. We are not to conclude that an object was created by man, unless its form, and the arrangement of its parts, are such, as could not possibly, or would not probably, be produced by the operation of the laws of nature, independent of the effects of mind; but we can be under no such restriction as this, in proving that objects are the work of God, for, excepting things formed by man, all objects are produced by the operation of these laws. We are not to suppose that an object was contrived by man, when he has no power to produce it, but this

does not restrict us in our proof of God's existence, for there is nothing which he may not have power to produce. We must conclude, therefore, that the existence of God may be inferred from the existence of every object which we behold. The number of sources from which this proof may be obtained, greatly augments the evidence of his existence ; how unreasonable, therefore, must that man be, who, in the face of all this evidence, shall dare to doubt.

## CHAPTER II.

### *AN ANALYSIS OF MIND.*

#### SEC. I. OF IDEAS.

An Idea is either a sensation or a conception. A sensation is an idea, caused in the mind immediately by an impression on the organs of sense. A conception is an idea corresponding to some sensation, which the mind retains, or recalls, when the impressions on the organs of sense, by which the corresponding sensation was produced, is removed.

The order of the succession of our sensation, is usually the object of contrivance, because man in many cases has power to controul it, and to produce the existence of a sensation which he desires, but no one can desire the existence of a conception, which he has not.

Conceptions are, nevertheless, sometimes the object of contrivance. A man, when he has an agreeable conception in his mind, may contrive a method of recalling it at other times, or of communicating it to others. Poems are contrivances of this kind.

No simple conception can exist in the mind, before a corresponding sensation. By abstraction we may divide a complex sensation. By imagination we may form from simple conceptions, those which are complex, and to which we have no corresponding sensations; but then we must have had sensations corres-

ponding to those simple conceptions, of which the complex one is formed.

We cannot have a conception, without conceiving ourselves placed in a situation to receive the corresponding sensation. No man can have a conception of an object, and at the same time conceive it to be placed behind him. No man can have a conception of the whole circumference of a circle, in the centre of which he conceives himself to be placed; nor can we form a conception of the whole surface of a globe or a cube.

We have, when awake, the power of distinguishing conceptions from sensations. But in sleep, conceptions derived from sight and hearing, are frequently, if not always, mistaken for sensations.

Conceptions may be agreeable or disagreeable, but not in so high a degree as sensations. For this reason, when an agreeable conception is in the mind, the corresponding sensation is always desired. Without the two kinds of ideas here mentioned a being could not contrive. He could not contrive without sensations, for they are the objects of contrivance. That there could be no contrivance without conception is manifest. The being that contrives must have a conception of the means used in producing the desired effect, or he could not conceive their use. He must also have a conception, of the object of his contrivance, for he would not labor to produce, that which he did not conceive.

The power of distinguishing conceptions from sensations, is also necessary to contrivance. Into what confusion should we be thrown, if these ideas were mistaken for one another?

Nor should we ever exert ourselves to contrive, if conceptions were equally agreeable with their corresponding sensations. The superior pleasures which

we derive from the latter ideas, may therefore be considered necessary to contrivance.

## SEC. II. OF ATTENTION.

Attention is the direction of the mind to some particular object, or train of ideas ; or the faculty by which the will influences the train of thought in the mind.

Mr. Stewart thinks that this faculty is a power which the will possesses, of excluding some ideas from the mind, and of retaining others. The will certainly does not act on the train of our thoughts, by producing new ideas, nor can it prevent new thoughts from entering the mind, when they are suggested by association, because nothing can be willed, concerning an idea, which is not in the mind. I believe (though the opinion may perhaps appear hypothetical) that the will has power to exclude from the mind, immediately on their entering it, ideas not agreeable to its purposes, by which exclusion the mind is thrown back upon its former ideas. This opinion differs little (if any) from that of Mr. Stewart.

That attention is a faculty of the mind, which is governed by the will, is admitted by all. There are some instances however in which it appears not to be entirely voluntary. A person suffering under an acute pain, finds it difficult to attend to any thing but the pain itself. If you attempt to read in a room, where there is much noise and conversation, you will soon find your attention turned from your book. But these facts, as well as others of the kind, may be accounted for by the changes of the will. When a person attempts to read, for instance, his belief that this would be advantageous, is founded on a process of reasoning, which entirely disappears, the moment he begins to

read. If then any thing occurs, to divert his attention to other subjects, he immediately turns from his book, his motives for reading being not then present to his mind. These may not be immediately recalled, and when they are, his thoughts may be again diverted in the same manner. This reasoning will serve for all instances wherein attention appears not to be completely controuled by the will.

No being could contrive without attention, for without it the train of our thoughts could not be directed to the object of contrivance. The phenomena of dreaming are accounted for, by supposing attention to be suspended during sleep. If we then possessed not attention, our thoughts when waking would have all the irregularities of a dream. It is true that many improvements in the arts have been suggested to the contrivers by accident, but some attention is necessary from the first thought on the subject to the completion of the contrivance. A previous attention to the same subject, is also manifest, for otherwise it had not been introduced by accidental associations. Harrington derived his notion of the form of a republic, from seeing the contrivance of two girls in dividing their bread; but had he not previously attended to the science of government the same sight had not introduced a thought on that subject.

### SEC. III. OF ABSTRACTION.

Abstraction is that faculty of the mind, by which a complex idea is divided into conceptions more simple, than any corresponding sensation.

Abstraction, when it is independent of imagination, is, like attention, governed by the will. It appears to differ from attention chiefly in this, that in attention the whole of an idea is excluded from the mind, which is thereby thrown back, upon the one which preceded

it, whereas in abstraction only a part of the idea is excluded, and the mind dwells upon the remaining part.

It is a law of our minds that whatever may be divided in sensation, may be divided in conception. Thus the idea of a horse, which when a sensation, may be divided into a sensation of each of the legs, the head, and of the body, may, when a conception, be divided in like manner, so that we may form distinct and separate conceptions, of the body and legs. The colour of a surface and the surface itself cannot be separated in sensation, nor are we able to form a conception of a surface, without colour, or of colour, without surface.

Abstraction is necessary to contrivance; for what progress could we make in the arts, if we were obliged to consider objects in the same extent in which they are presented to us by sensation. The whole view before our eyes forms in the mind but one sensation, which without abstraction, could not be divided in conception. Without this faculty, I could form no conception of a tree which I see before me, without joining with it a conception of the landscape and the sky which I behold in the same view. Nothing without it could be conceived, which would not when seen fill the whole angle of vision. But if we could form a conception of no object of less magnitude than this, it is manifest that we could make no progress in contrivance.

#### SEC. IV. OF ASSOCIATION.

Association is that principle or disposition of the mind, by which one idea tends to introduce another, and by which our ideas are connected, and their succession regulated, independent of the influence of the will. That such a principle exists, is known to every one who has the slightest acquaintance with the philos-

ophy of mind ; but philosophers have differed in their opinions, with regard to the primary laws of mind, which constitute that principle. Mr. Hume thinks that the qualities and relations of ideas which produce association are three, viz : Resemblance, Relation of cause and effect, and Contiguity of time and place.— It has since been shown, (and I am surprised that it should have escaped Mr. Hume,) that the relation of cause and effect may be reduced to contiguity of time and place ; since a cause (according to the principles of Mr. Hume himself) is no more than an antecedent, and the effect a consequent, which are always conjoined. It has also been remarked that contrast, as well as many other relations, produces association. In my opinion however (if I may venture one against so many and so great authorities) the relation between ideas, which produce association, may be reduced to contiguity of the time of the existence of those ideas in the mind, or in other words all the phenomena of association may be accounted for by the following laws of the mind.

Every idea which has once existed in the mind, has a tendency, when renewed, to recall either the idea which succeeded it, or that which preceded it, when before in the mind.

This tendency is strengthened by the repeated succession of the same ideas, and by the attention which was paid them.

It will be said that resemblance is well known to produce association, and I shall be asked how I account for this by the law I have mentioned. I answer that there are two kinds of resemblance, the resemblance of the whole, and the resemblance of a part. The ideas excited in the mind by objects possessing the first kind of resemblance, are identical, since the identity of ideas is no more than a resemblance. If I behold a man perfectly similar in features, form and dress, to

one whom I have before known, the idea in my mind, is the same which I should have possessed, if I had seen the identical person with whom I had been acquainted, and the same ideas would be introduced by association.

The ideas excited by objects which resemble each other only in part, are indeed dissimilar, but when all but the parts which resemble each other, are struck from the mind by abstraction, the remaining ideas are the same. If I behold a man wearing a coat similar to one worn by a man whom I had formerly known, I should strike out of my mind by abstraction (for the mind is continually abstracting and compounding its ideas) all parts of the ideas received, except that of the coat, which would be the same that I should receive from viewing the coat of my friend. With this idea it is manifest, according to the law which I have laid down, that the idea of my friend himself would be associated.

The reader will find no difficulty in reconciling the fact that contiguity of time and place produce association to my principles: but contrast requires some attention before all the objections to this theory can be removed. This relation is not a fertile source of association, and the little effect that it has, arises from the fact that an object and its contrast are often conjoined in reasoning.

The tendency of ideas to introduce others, depends on the state of the mind, in which they exist, but not on that of the external objects, from which they are derived, nor on any qualities in the ideas themselves. It depends, in fact, on the order in which these ideas have before existed in the mind. Hence the operation of reasoning, comparing, &c. strengthen and multiply the sources of association.

But whatever may be the qualities, either in the

ideas themselves, or in the mind in which they exist, on which association depends, it is essential to contrivance, and indeed to nearly all the operations of the mind; for without it no idea could ever be recalled to the mind except by sensation. The law on which (according to the opinion given above) it depends, is well adapted to contrivance, for according to that law, those ideas will be the aptest to be recalled to the mind, which are connected with the object of contrivance.

## SEC. V. OF IMAGINATION.

Imagination is that faculty by which the mind compounds its ideas, and forms conceptions of objects which never existed, or never were presented to the senses of the person conceiving them.

Imagination is a complex faculty, implying conception, abstraction, and association, but it is not solely the operation of these principles combined. There must be something which does not necessarily exist with these faculties. A person might possess them all, and yet be unable to combine his ideas, or to form conceptions more complex than his sensations. The operation of these faculties alone could never give us a conception of a horse with the head and arms of a man, with wings, or of one whose colour was green.

It may here be observed, that not only conceptions are compounded by imagination, but parts of conceptions which are inseparable without it. Thus colour may be abstracted from one form, and combined in conception with another, though it can never be made the object of a separate conception.

Imagination is of immense importance in contrivance, of so great indeed, that it is scarcely possible for any being to contrive without it. Who could contrive a watch if they could form no conception of a wheel, dif-

ferent from what they had before seen. Without imagination we could form no conception of the machine itself before it was made, and it certainly could not be made before such conception was formed. Without imagination, therefore, nothing which had not previously existed, could be formed by design.

#### SEC. VI. OF MEMORY.

Memory is the knowledge which we have of our past ideas and affections, and of the order in which they were connected in the mind. It appears to consist of a number of conceptions, closely connected by association, with a perception that they have been in the mind in the same order before.

I remember that I was in Albany a short time past. In remembering this I have a conception of the streets and houses of that city, of various objects which I there beheld, of events which were transacted, and of circumstances relating to the time. I likewise recall the conceptions which I then possessed. All these are closely connected by association, and I have a perception that they have existed in my mind in the same order before.

Without this perception the cluster of ideas which exist in the mind, in memory, could not be distinguished from the more complex productions of imagination. Of course memory (if we could then call it such) would give us no knowledge of the past. This perception must therefore be regarded as a primary power of the mind.

Association is manifestly necessary to memory, for without that faculty, no idea which had once passed out of the mind, could ever be recalled or renewed, except by a new impression on the organs of sense.— Association is also necessary to imagination, hence we

have additional evidence of its importance in contrivance, and in all the operations of the mind. It is manifest that memory is necessary to contrivance, not only because it is necessary to the attainment of knowledge, but because without it, the beginning of a contrivance must be lost before the end could be completed. It has been shown that no mathematical proposition could be demonstrated without memory, since no conclusion could be drawn from premises previously proved, if we could not rely upon our memory, for the certainty of their proof. It is equally manifest, that no one (even if he could possess the necessary knowledge of the laws of nature) could without this faculty ever complete a contrivance. Suppose the mechanic has invented an expedient for putting his machine in motion, this invention must be useless, if it be not remembered till the remaining part of the contrivance be completed. If the contriver of a watch had determined that its motion should arise from a spring, if this could not be remembered, till he had determined the places and proportions of the wheels, the manner in which they should be adapted to each other, and the motions of the hands, by which the time was to be pointed out, the contrivance could never be completed. But suppose the contrivance to be completed, let the machine be completely designed, without memory the labour bestowed upon it must be lost, for the contrivance must be forgotten before the machine could be constructed.

#### SEC. VII. OF BELIEF.

In the introduction to this work, I have shown, that without some first principles of belief, which were received without proof, we could not be brought by reasoning to believe any proposition whatever. These first principles nature has kindly granted us.

The principles upon which all our knowledge appears to be founded, is the expectation that the order of events will continue the same in future that we have found it to be in time past.

These principles are not essential to the existence of mind. A being might be created who should possess none of them. The only reason which we can give for their existence is, that it is agreeable to the will of him who made us.

Nor are these principles necessarily true, either in themselves, or because their belief is forced by nature upon all. This I have also shown in the introduction to this work. Men may be compelled by nature to believe a proposition which is false. The expectation of the continuance of the laws of nature might have been planted in the mind, though those laws were continually varying. If we had found that events had always in time past taken place agreeably to certain laws, we might still have been so constituted as to place no confidence in the continuance of those laws.

But we find that our first principles of belief, have thus far conducted us to truth, and we believe that they will do the same, as long as the world shall last. This is to be regarded, as an extraordinary instance of the harmony of our constitution.\*

No being can contrive without knowledge or without belief which agreed with truth. This assertion is too manifest to need proof. There may be beings able to

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\* The truth of our belief, concerning our condition in a future world, (though ever so firmly fixed on our minds,) is not necessary to the harmony of nature, since a mistake concerning our future life can never injure us in this, and will doubtless be rectified when we reach the next. If it should be found that God has prepared eternal happiness for all, instead of devoting a part to destruction, could it be pretended that our mistake in this matter was contrary to the harmony of nature?

contrive whose principles of belief are different from ours, but whatever those principles may be, I believe they must show (especially if agreeable to truth) a degree of harmony in the constitution of the being that possesses them.

#### SEC. VIII. OF DESIRE.

Desire is the preference which every man has for certain sensations, (and in some degree for conceptions) above others.

No reason can be given why we possess this preference, except that we are so constituted by that which gave us existence. There is no inconsistency in supposing a being to exist, to whom the ideas which he possessed, should be totally indifferent, and equally agreeable. There is nothing in the nature of pain, which makes it necessarily more odious than pleasure, but we are so constituted that we shun the former and pursue the latter, though no reason can be given for our choice.

There is no inconsistency in supposing a being to exist who should possess a like preference for certain sensations, above others, to whom pleasure should be agreeable, and pain odious, at the time of their existence, who yet should be perfectly regardless whether he was to feel pain or pleasure at a future period.—Admitting that he has a preference for certain sensations, that he is happy when some, and miserable while other ideas exist in his mind, there can still be no reason given why he should regard his future happiness more than that of another being.

We might have been so constituted that we should care not whether we were to be happy or miserable to-morrow. Our personal identity, according to Mr. Locke, consists in our consciousness of our past con-

duct, and thoughts, but what is there in this consciousness, that we should regard the person who will possess it to-morrow, more than an other. The being who to-morrow is conscious of the ideas which I now possess, will be the same being that I am to-day; but what is there in this, that I should regard his welfare.

Suppose a man should be told, that next week he should be burnt. He answers, this is nothing to me at present. I indeed abhor the feelings which are derived from burning, but what have I to do with the person who is to be burnt next week. He will be conscious of the ideas which I now possess; but why should I regard him the more for this. He will possess the same body that my soul now inhabits; but what have I to do with the body, which is inanimate in itself, and cannot feel. He will be the same identical person that I now am. Until you show me in what this identity consists, and why I should regard the person possessing it, sooner than another, I can have no partiality in his favour. Would there be any thing inconsistent in this answer. No. It would only be different from that of nature—from that of common men.

But in our desire of future happiness, we may behold another instance of the harmony of our constitution. How unhappy must our condition have been, if we had been created sensible to present pain and pleasure, and yet regardless of our future fate. We should have been forever miserable, without making any exertions to shun our misery.

If there was no such thing as desire, if we did not prefer one sensation to another, if this preference did not extend to the future as well as the present, there would be no such thing as contrivance. The mind would have no stimulus to excite it to action. If we were without desire, we should forever remain in a state of stupid lethargy; we should differ little from

the stones beneath our feet. If our passions regarded only the present, we should remain in a state of unre-sisting misery. It is manifest, therefore, that every being which contrives must possess desires which extend to the future.

## SEC. IX. OF POWER.

Power is the tendency of the will of an intelligent being, to produce the event willed.

There can be no reason known to us, why an intelligent being should possess power. The fact that they do possess it, like the most simple and general laws of matter, can only be learned by experience. If a man is asked how he came by the power of moving his arm at pleasure he can give no answer. If we are asked how God came by the power of creating worlds, by the act of his will, we may answer that he derives this power from the external laws, by which his mind is governed, but why these laws should be such as they are, we know not.

Every being that has produced any thing by contrivance, or indeed in any other way, must have power. A being destitute of power could not carry his contrivance into execution, neither could he contrive. Attention and abstraction, as they depend on the will, imply power, and I have shown that without these faculties no being could contrive.

It may, at first view, appear paradoxical to assert, that the power of every being who contrives, must be limited ; yet if a being possesses infinite power, I cannot conceive what use he may have for contrivance.—He certainly can have no use for means, and for these all contrivances are intended. If God possesses in-

finite power, that is, if he has the power of producing whatever sensation he pleases, I cannot conceive what motive he may have for producing worlds, that possess an external existence.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CONCLUSION WHICH WE MUST DRAW FROM THE FOREGOING ANALYSIS.

If we review the foregoing Analysis, we shall find that there are a large number of principles, or laws of mind, without which no being could contrive. The laws and powers, which I have shown to be necessary to contrivance, are fourteen, viz : Two kinds of ideas corresponding to sensations and conceptions—The power of distinguishing these ideas from each other—The superior pleasure which is derived from sensations which are agreeable, and the greater degree of misery which arises from those which are odious—Attention—Abstraction—Association—Imagination—Memory—Belief—The truth of our belief—Desire, or the preference of some sensations above others—A regard for the future—and lastly, Power. Remove any of these, from the mind of a being that possesses them, and his nature is so changed, that he can produce nothing by design.

We have therefore in every being that contrives, an arrangement and disposition of laws, to the production of certain effect, a subserviency of means to an end, a relation of instruments to an use, which must, according to the principles of belief given in our first chapter, imply the presence of intelligence and mind, in the power which produced that being. We perceive that the laws and ideas of a designing mind must be so formed, so adapted to each other, that should any of

them be changed or removed, either no effect would be produced, or none similar to design and contrivance, the effects which arise from mind, under its present state and laws. We infer from this, that such mind must be created for, and adapted to a purpose, if we may ever discover a purpose in the works of a being with whose desires we are unacquainted.

I have shown plainly in the preceding chapter, that no reason can be given, for the existence of any of the laws, by which our minds are governed. We cannot possibly conceive that their existence is necessary.— We might with as good reason impute a necessary existence, to the wheels and springs of a watch, to the organs of plants and animals, as to the laws of intelligence and thought. But shall we affirm, or even conjecture, that these laws so complex, yet possessing an order and regularity among themselves perfectly harmonious and necessary, to the effects which they produce, are the result of chance alone. There is nothing possessing a material existence, which we may not, with as great reason, suppose to have fortuitously sprung into existence. There remains yet one supposition more, namely, that every mind which contrives is designed and created by an intelligent being. This is the supposition which we must undoubtedly adopt. I am of an opinion that the argument for the existence of such an intelligent being, which may be derived from the harmony of the laws of mind, is stronger than that which may be drawn from the order and regularity of the universe, or of the organs and members of the animals and plants which it contains. We behold nothing in the animal or material world, which possesses a greater number of parts, separated from each other, in any considerable degree, than the mind possesses laws; nor are these parts in any body organic or inorganic, adapted to each other with greater harmony than the laws of mind. There is no animal, whose members show so clear works of an adaptation.

to a purpose, as the laws by which all beings who contrive must be governed.

But the question may perhaps be asked, whether the faculties I have mentioned, are absolutely necessary to contrivance. It must be acknowledged by all, that as our minds are formed, the removal of any of these faculties would destroy the power of contrivance, if no others were substituted in their place ; but is it not possible that a being should exist, destitute of a part of these, who should be yet able to contrive, through the influence of some faculties, which we do not possess. The Atheist may hope to weaken my demonstration, by questions like this. I answer to this, that I shall not attempt to demonstrate that there can be no being having power to contrive, whose faculties are different from ours, but I am confident that no being can contrive, who does not possess faculties, that show marks of design. If we were told that a time piece had been found, of a construction never before known, and set in motion by a power never before used, or discovered ; that its motions were regulated neither by a pendulum, a balance, nor a spring, but in a way with which we were unacquainted, that this machine kept good time, and pointed out every hour and minute of the day, with the regularity and exactness of a clock, we should not conjecture that this might be the work of chance, or of an unintelligent author. We should not assert that we knew nothing of the adaptation and arrangement of the wheels of this new machine, and that therefore we could not pronounce it the product of design ; but that the effect produced was such as we know could not arise except from such an arrangement of parts, such a subserviency of means to an end, as must have arisen from contrivance. The fact that we were unacquainted with the nature of the machinery, instead of weakening our conclusion, that it was produced by design, would only serve to increase our opinion of the genius and wisdom of the contriver.

In the same manner, if we were told that there existed beings who could contrive without some of the faculties which with us are necessary to contrivance, we should pronounce the evidence, that his mind was produced by design to be greater than that our own was thus produced. This conclusion would be adopted with still greater confidence, if the mind of that being was more perfect, and his contrivances more ingenious, than our own. The more glorious the nature of the being who contrives, the stronger the proof that his mind was the work of a contriver. If we could analyze the minds of the angels, we should undoubtedly discover still stronger marks of design than in our own, and perceive more clearly the glory and wisdom of God.

Yet I cannot acknowledge that a mind destitute of all our faculties, could ever be able to contrive, whatever might be substituted for them. Two kinds of ideas, corresponding to sensations and conceptions, associations of some kind, will, power, and knowledge, (which last might indeed be derived from sources different from ours,) if not all the other faculties and laws which I have mentioned, are absolutely necessary to contrivance. The possession of these, with substitutes for the others, is sufficient to prove a mind the work of a contriver.

Having proved that all beings who contrive, must be the work of an intelligent designing mind, the step is short to the demonstration of the existence of God, from the nature of the mind of man. Man, we know, is a contriving being, he must therefore have had a contriver, an intelligent mind, the God whom we adore. This conclusion cannot be denied, unless we deny the principles of belief given in the first chapter of this work.

We might have drawn the same inference, with

scarce a greater possibility of error, from a different method of reasoning, without any analysis of our minds. Mr. Paley, in stating his argument, asserts, that if in the watch which he mentions, we had discovered a contrivance for producing a new machine, similar to it, this fact would not weaken our conclusion that it was the contrivance of an intelligent mind. "We are now asking," says he, "for the cause of that subserviency to an use, that relation to an end, which we have remarked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question, by telling us that the preceding watch produced it. There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver. Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty further back, i.e. by supposing the watch before us to have been produced by another watch, that by a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going back ever so far brings us no nearer the last degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver."

It may be added to this, that if we were told that the marks of design and contrivance diminished as we went further back; that each watch possessed less order and regularity, less harmony in the arrangement of its parts, than that which was produced from it, and that by following the series back, we should finally arrive to a producing machine, which possessed no marks of design in its construction, we should deem this answer to our enquiries unsatisfactory, and even absurd. But why? How know we that this hypothesis is not possible? Our answer must be that nothing can produce order which has not order in itself, that regularity does not spring from confusion.

This answer would serve against those who should assert that the watch was produced by a machine different from itself. It would prove that that machine, whatever its construction might be, must show marks of

contrivance, properties which would show it to be the product of design.

This answer will also enable us to prove the existence of God, from the existence of the watch itself, without looking for contrivances in the works of nature, which we may compare with it. We ask for the cause of the order and regularity, which we behold in the watch; we are told that it was contrived by man. But we are not yet satisfied. The order and regularity in the watch prove the same in the mind which produced it. We must therefore conclude, that this mind is the work of another intelligence, possessing greater order than itself, and far more glorious in its nature.

This conclusion is not weakened by supposing that mind may possess a necessary existence. We cannot conceive that order and regularity should necessarily exist. Necessary existence is such as arises from the immutable laws of nature, which exist independent of any mind. Can we suppose that these laws should be such from chance alone, as to produce regularity, harmony, and arrangement of the faculties of mind to a purpose. We might as well attribute a necessary existence at once to the watch itself, as to the mind which designed it.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

THE two attributes of God, which are best proved from nature, are his power and knowledge. The slightest view of the universe, must convince that the being who created it possessed an extraordinary degree of power, and when we examine the contrivances which it contains, we must also adore his wisdom.

The power and knowledge of God are both said to be infinite.

By asserting that God's power is infinite, we may mean, either that it is infinite compared with that of man, i. e. that no multiplication of the power of man can be equal to the power of God; or that there can be no possible act, which God has not power to perform. In the former sense the assertion is manifestly true, for since the power of man is dependent on the will of God, it can by no multiplication ever equal the power of that being. A million of men are as much dependent on the will of God as one. If the assertion be taken in the latter sense, we can never prove (unless it be from revelation) that it is true. There may be acts which surpass the power of God. There may be beings more powerful than the creator of the earth.

By asserting that the knowledge of God is infinite, we must mean, that there is nothing which is unknown

to him.\* The truth of this can only be proved from revelation.

The most important attribute of God is benevolence. This attribute authors have attempted to prove from an examination of nature.

"When God created the human species," says the ingenious Mr. Paley, "he either wished their happiness, or he wished their misery, or he was indifferent and unconcerned about both." He then attempts to establish, the first of these suppositions, by showing that the two last are false.

By wishing their happiness, I understand him to mean that the more happiness man enjoyed, the more would God be pleased,

By wishing their misery, that the less happiness man enjoyed, and the more pain he suffered, the will of God would be fulfilled in a greater degree. By being indifferent, that he cared not how much or how little happiness man enjoyed.

If such be their meaning, it may be that neither of his suppositions are true, for there is yet a fourth, more probable than either of these, viz: That God wished us to possess a particular degree of happiness, and misery, and that he had been displeased, and his purposes in some degree frustrated, had we been more or less happy. This degree of happiness as we have great reason to suppose, is that which we actually enjoy. Is not the degree of happiness and misery, which God hath given us, that which he wishes us to possess?

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\* We may however suppose that God has a perfect knowledge concerning his own works, and a perfect power over them. This appears highly probable from the light of nature. We should presume that every being possesses such knowledge concerning, and power over, his works, till the contrary be proved. We are not to suppose God to have failed in his works without the clearest demonstration.

But let us attend further to Mr. Paley's argument. "If God," says he, "had wished our misery, he might have made every thing we tasted bitter, every thing we saw loathsome, every thing we touched a sting, every smell a stench, and every sound discord. But if he had wished our happiness, could he not have made every thing we tasted pleasant, every thing we saw beautiful, all our feelings agreeable, every smell a sweet savour, every sound harmonious? In short, could he not have made us perfectly happy?"

This he certainly could have done, if his power is infinite, and if it is not, we have no proof that he could have made us more miserable than we are.

"The world abounds," says this author, "with contrivances, and all the contrivances, which we are acquainted with, are directed to beneficial purposes. Evil no doubt exists but it is never, that we can perceive, the object of contrivance. Teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache; their aching now and then is incidental to the contrivance; perhaps inseparable from it; or even if you will, let it be called a defect in the contrivance; but not the object of it. There is no contrivance in nature to produce pain and misery. We never discover a train of contrivances to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomists ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, this is to irritate—this is to inflame—this to convey the gravel to the kidneys—this gland to secrete the humour which forms the gout:—if by chance he comes to a part of which he knows not the use, the most he can say is, that it is useless—no one ever suspects that it is put there to incommode, to annoy, or to torment.

In answer to this I would observe—

Firstly, That there is no contrivance, that we can

perceive, to produce death, yet no one will believe that God, who drove us from the garden of Eden, lest we should eat of the fruit of the tree of life, wished us to be immortal.

Secondly, We know nothing of the immediate causes of pain, and of course, if there were any contrivances in the human frame, to produce it, we could not distinguish them. Let an instrument for producing pain, (such as we might suppose would exist in the body,) be placed before us, we could not discover the use for which it was designed. Of course if any such existed in the body, they must be unknown to us.

Thirdly, There are no contrivances which we can perceive, the object of which is to produce pleasure. We have many members and organs which appear to have been contrived for the purpose of prolonging our existence, the right use of these produces pleasure, and their misuse produces pain. Here pain and pleasure appear to be the instruments for preserving the existence of our species, but we find no instruments by which either of these are produced. God too, appears to have been very indifferent in the choice of these means, except where but one was suitable to his purpose. Pain is always chosen when it will answer the end better than pleasure.

Fourthly, There are many contrivances for the preservation and re-production of the human species, without which it could not exist a moment. These prove that God wished the existence of the human race, but not that he wished us any extraordinary longevity or happiness. A full view of man must convince us that God paid more regard to the preservation of his species, than to his happiness or misery. We must believe too, (unless we believe God has not made the universe such as he wished it,) that the degree of happiness which we enjoy, is that which is most agreeable to God.

I make these remarks for the purpose of showing that we can never have such proof of the existence of this attribute of God, as to infer from it that the evils which exist, whether they arise from nature or from crimes, are violations of his will. I acknowledge that we have good reason to believe that God wishes our happiness, but not that he prefers it to his other purposes, or that it was a principal motive with him for our creation. We may so far trust to God's benevolence, as to believe that he will not afflict us with useless misery, and to hope, where events are wholly unknown, that he will order them in a manner most agreeable to our happiness; but we are not to say when evil has existed, that God has failed in his purposes, of making us happy, nor are we to suppose that this evil will be attended with some secret good.

We may, in fine, lay it down as a rule, to which none can object, and which we should always observe in our speculations, that of two systems, or hypotheses, otherwise equally probable, we should adopt that which is most agreeable to the benevolence of God; but for any thing beyond this, we have not sufficient proof.\*

The next attribute of the Deity, which I shall here notice, is his justice. This is said to be perfect. Its existence cannot be proved by arguments drawn from nature. It is not without difficulty that we can conceive what may be intended by it, when applied to the creator of the earth. When applied to men it im-

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\* To conclude from the light of nature, that the happiness of man was an object with God, in the creation of the world, and thence to infer that whatever increases our happiness was agreeable to God, and that whatever diminished it was contrary to his will, would be much the same, as if we should conclude from the examination of a watch, that the motion of the hands was the object of the contrivance, and thence infer, that whatever accelerated this motion was agreeable to the will, & whatever retarded it, injurious to the purposes of the contriver.

plies obedience to some law, but what laws are there which God must obey ? Yet it behooves us to find some sense in which this term may be understood. I can conceive nothing in the character of God which may be denoted by it, unless it be an impartiality in the distribution of his favours.

But the noblest and most adorable trait in the character of God, is the fact that he requires no worship. This is the best proved to us of all his attributes, excepting his power and wisdom. Reason must teach us, that a being of such infinite power and glory, cannot highly regard our adoration, and we accordingly find that in the dispensation of his blessings he asks not who hath prayed, nor who hath knelt.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF THE METHOD OF DISCOVERING THE WILL OF GOD.

"THERE are two methods," says Mr. Paley, "of coming at the will of God, on any point.

First, By his express declarations, when they are to be had, which must be sought for in scripture.

Second, By what we can discover of his designs and disposition, from his works, or, as we call it, the light of nature."

To this I answer—

That the positive commands, and express declarations of God cannot be considered, as proofs of his will. If God deliver a positive command to all mankind, and only one tenth part of them obey, the more reasonable supposition is, that he wished the obedience of no others. As God is omnipotent, at least over his own works, if he wished the obedience of all, would he not force us to obey. His wishes so far as they relate to his creatures, must certainly be fulfilled.

Mr. Paley compares our relation to God, to that of an ambassador to his sovereign. A sovereign would give his ambassador such command as he wished should be obeyed, because he would presume that the effect of the commands would be their obedience. If they

should produce any other effect, he could not foresee it, and of course their obedience would be the effects, for the purpose of producing which the commands were given. But the case is different with God. He is not thus limited in his knowledge. He would foresee from the beginning whether his commands would or would not be obeyed, as also their most minute and accidental effects, & would regulate them accordingly. If he foresaw that his commands would be obeyed, he would command acts which he wished to be performed. If he saw that man was disobedient, he would give commands which he wished should be disobeyed. If he wished ten men to perform an act, and foresaw that ten only out of an hundred would obey, his commands for performing the act, would be delivered to the whole hundred.

There have been instances, in which men, foreseeing that their commands would not be regarded, have given such as they did not wish should be obeyed. As the foresight of God is infinitely greater than that of man, such must be found much more frequently in his conduct, if it could be submitted to our examination.

Let us see if there is no examples of measures of this kind mentioned in the sacred scriptures. God delivered to Pharaoh, by his servant Moses, a command, attested by miracles, to let the children of Israel go out into the wilderness to worship; yet he did not wish that Pharaoh should obey, for he hardened his heart so that he should not.

God commanded the Jews, by his own mouth, that they should hear his son, yet he intended that that son should die on the cross by their hands. If they had obeyed his commands, how had the justice of God been satisfied and man saved. Mr. Paley himself must allow that there is no appeal beyond these facts.

Mr. Paley asserts that in the absence of the express declaration of God, we may sometimes discover his will, from the light of nature. Let us enquire what

are the marks by which the will of a being may be discovered in his works, and examine how far these marks may be seen in the works of God. First then when the contriver of any work is a being known to us, with whose desires we are acquainted, we may learn his object in producing the contrivance, by discerning what effect it produces, which is desired by the contriving being. By this method we learn the purpose for which machines of human invention are contrived; but by this method we can never learn the purpose of God from his works, because we have no previous knowledge of his desires.

Secondly, when we have no knowledge of the desire of the contriver, but know the laws of nature by which the work is governed, or the relation of cause and effect subsisting between its various parts, we may sometimes learn the designs of the contriver, by discovering some effect which is produced by it, but has no effect on the work itself. This effect, we may suppose, was the ultimate object of the contriver, for if not, its existence is superfluous. Thus in the watch, we perceive that the motion of the hands is produced by, but has no effect on, the remaining part of the machine—Remove the hands the wheels continue their motion, but remove a wheel and the hands must stop. From these facts, if we had no further information, we should conclude that the motion of the hands was the object of contrivance.

By this method of reasoning, we may perhaps infer, that the existence of the human race was a principal motive with God, for the creation of the earth. The rest of creation might remain nearly the same without man, but man must perish, were even the animals and plants removed.\* From this it is manifest, that the

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\* There is however no part of creation which does not produce some effect on the remaining parts. Vegetables and animals sustain man, and man produces vegetables and animals. Our conclusion therefore, that the existence of man was the ultimate object of creation, is only probable.

existence of the human race was desired by God, but we are not yet taught what particular acts are agreeable to him, nor what rules he wishes us to observe in our conduct. We cannot say that as God wishes the existence of man, he must be displeased with every act which tends to shorten that existence, for we have no proof that God wishes man to be immortal, or to live longer than he does.

Thirdly, if we know nothing of the laws, by which the work is governed, nor of the desires and powers of the contriving being, we can never discover his purpose in producing the work. We cannot perceive any effect that is desired by the contriver, because we know nothing of his desires. We cannot discover any effect which is produced by the thing contrived, and yet has no effect upon it, because as we do not know the laws by which the work is governed, we cannot know that any part produces no effect. If we did not know the laws by which a watch is governed, we could not know that the hands were not necessary to the motion of the wheels.

Fourthly, if the contriver is a being infinite in power, we are to suppose that every part of the work was desired for itself. No part can be desired for the effects which it produces, for an omnipotent being can have no use for means. Hence, as God has doubtless a perfect power over his own works, we are to suppose that whatever takes place, is agreeable to his will. We may therefore decide with certainty on God's will, concerning things that are past, but we know nothing of his will concerning the future, further than we know what will take place.

It may be urged as an objection, that according to the opinions advanced above, we can never govern our conduct by the will of God, and that God can never make his will known to man. But this consequence does not follow. It is not by commands, but by the

passions which he hath implanted in human nature, that God governs man. God commanded us to multiply and replenish the earth, but the earth had now been unpeopled, had not this mandate been seconded by a passion of much greater influence. The person therefore who would act agreeably to the will of God, had best obey the passions which God hath given him.— No matter what these passions may be, if we follow their guidance, we shall obey the will of our creator. Even if we should be governed by a passion for disobedience, we should probably obey, we should perform the will of God, by striving to transgress it.

# **SPIRITUAL MUSTARD POT:**

## **PART SECOND.**

### **ANSWERS TO THE OBJECTIONS OF THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

#### **CHAPTER I.**

##### **FIRST OBJECTION—TO THE JUSTICE AND BENEVOLENCE OF GOD AS TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES.**

THE first objection to the divine origin of the scriptures, which I shall attempt to refute, is that which may be urged against the justice and benevolence of God's government, as described in those sacred writings. To those who are not much inclined to the worship of God, whose only hope of safety is based on the falsehood of the scriptures, the eternal damnation of the greater part of mankind, appears an act of wanton and cruel tyranny, not required by justice and contrary to every principle of benevolence. And as it is affirmed by the same scriptures, which teach us that such punishment will be inflicted, and as it appears probable from the light of nature, that God is just, merciful, and benevolent, they would infer from the inconsistency of those attributes, with the government of God, as it is therein described, that those writings did not originate from him; for they cannot believe that God would give us a revelation false and inconsistent with itself. They believe it impossible that God should inform us that he is benevolent, and

at the same time declare, that he would pursue a course in his government, totally inconsistent with benevolence. I shall endeavor, in the first place, to give the arguments of these persons, as clearly and concisely as possible, and secondly the answer and refutation, which I deem most agreeable to reason and piety.

I. It is alledged by these infidels (and I acknowledge the truth of the principle) that the sole use of punishment is to prevent the commission of crimes; that justice, whether divine or human, does not in this world, or in the world to come, require any punishment which does not tend to produce that effect. That the punishment of the guilty, is an evil, inflicted only to prevent greater evils, and that therefore to render punishment justifiable, it is necessary that the crimes prevented by it, should be such, as would if they existed, be a greater evil than the punishment itself.— For instance, to justify the punishment of murder with death, it is necessary that the number of murders prevented, be as great as the number of executions. That when justice is made to require any punishment, farther than it tends to prevent the commission of crimes, it ceases to be a virtue, and becomes a fault, in the power that regards it, since it manifestly increases the miseries of the beings under such government. The truth of these principles, (which must be borne in mind, in order to understand the arguments of the infidels,) I readily acknowledge; though I observe that many christians are disposed to maintain, that perfect justice requires the punishment of the wicked, solely on account of their guilt: though no crimes should be prevented by it. Some indeed have gone so far as to affirm, that they believed in a future state of rewards and punishments, solely because complete justice is not always attained on earth,\* deeming it inconsistent with

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\* Do these gentlemen who believe a future punishment is necessary, because complete justice is not always satisfied on earth, and who believed that God is excused from suffering

the benevolence of God, that any one who has inflicted misery on another, should not be repaid with greater misery, though no beneficial purpose should be effected by his pains. They affect to be reconciled to the government of God, by reflecting that the innocent sufferer will be exalted into heaven, and the successful criminal cast into hell. But will this remedy the evils of which they complain? The exaltation of the innocent into heaven, may indeed form a consolation for their sufferings on earth, (and if the same happiness could not be granted without those suffering, a compensation too,) but I know not how the damnation of the guilty would increase it. If, indeed, it was known to all that each one should suffer as great or greater miseries than he should inflict on others, it would be happy for the earth, because all crimes would then be prevented; but this prevention would be the only reason why such punishment would be useful, as it is the sole object of justice. Whether the punishment threatened to the wicked, by the scriptures, would tend to produce this effect or not, I shall enquire in another place. At present I shall only affirm that this prevention of crimes is the sole object of justice, and of the punishment which justice inflicts, and re-

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crimes to exist, when they are punished. Suppose the countries where robberies and murders were every day committed, where no man's life was safe, from the dagger of the assassin, would be happy, provided all the offenders were brought to justice, and suffered the punishment due to their guilt. They cannot surely believe that the inhabitants of such a country would consider their miseries aggravated by the punishment of the guilty, so long as it did not prevent the perpetration of crimes. If they believed this, they would never tell us that a benevolent God, could punish the wicked, for any reason except that of preventing wickedness: what good indeed are the innocent to derive from the punishment of the wicked in another world; are they when freed in heaven from their human frailties, to take pleasure in the misery of others, because they may have once been their oppressors. "*Tantaene animis coelestibus irae?*"—Or is it feared, that if the guilty should be let loose in heaven, fornication, theft, and murder would be committed,

peat to those who alledge that it is not, that when justice requires any punishment, that does not tend to accomplish this object, it becomes a vice, which ought not to be suffered by man, and which is not (so far as our knowledge extends) regarded by God. And that if God's justice be of such a kind, it is wholly inconsistent with benevolence, and can only tend to make him hated by man, and by all beings, over whom his power extends; for all beings must abhor the person who casts misery upon them, without adding to his own happiness, or the happiness of others, whether it be done under the name of justice or malevolence. The advocates of theories, which make justice require punishment, without regard to its beneficial effects, may abide by their opinion, if they please, but I must defend the sublime doctrines of christianity by other principles, and place such philosophers by the side of those who would defend monarchy by the divine right of kings.

II. It is alledged by these enemies of christianity, that if the object of future punishment be to prevent the commission of crimes by men against one another on earth, the evil prevented is much, and even infinitely less than that committed in the infliction of the punishment. As the torment to be endured by the wicked is said to be infinite and eternal, it is evident, if these assertions be true, that one soul in hell, must suffer more misery, than all mankind, from the beginning to the end of the world, could suffer, were they left to their own destruction, without government and without virtue, and consequently, that the preservation of the whole earth, its amendment from the most miserable and vicious condition possible, to the most happy, would not justify the damnation of a single soul, and much less of the greater part of mankind.

The difference between the greatest possible happiness, and the greatest possible misery on earth, is but trifling, compared with the difference between the

happiness of heaven, and the misery of hell. Our misery on earth can last but a few years, but the torments of hell are eternal. If then we, or a great part of us, are to be cast into hell, to prevent the evils which we might, while in this world, inflict on one another, the remedy is certainly worse than the disease; and as much worse as the torments of hell are worse than the evils of this life.

Some will perhaps maintain, that the number of the damned, compared with the number of the righteous, will not be so great, as is here stated; because it is possible, that the christian religion will yet spread throughout the earth; and as the earth may last yet a time longer than it has existed, it is possible that the number of saints to come, may exceed in a high degree that of the unrepenting sinners who have existed or will exist. I have already shown that the damnation of a single soul is an evil greater than any good which can arise from the christian religion on earth, but thousands of millions of men have already existed and died, who, according to the tenets of our religion, are devoted to destruction; we can of course expect no good from its effects on our morals, equal to the misery to be endured by these. The torments of the damned are acknowledged to be greater than any evil that can be endured on earth; their number is already greater than the number of inhabitants which the earth can support at the same time; of course there must always be more souls (admitting the earth to stand forever) continually suffering the pains of hell than there can be on earth delivered from the evils incident to vice. Whatever therefore may be the effects of the christian religion, and the number of the saints, no good can arise from it, sufficient to justify the punishment of those already devoted to destruction. But the prospect that the christian religion will extend through the whole earth, is certainly less than could be wished. It has already existed near two thousand years, and

has not been received by one fourth of the human race. The heathen have but little inclination to receive it, and among christian nations there are but too many infidels. But when it has extended through all nations, all will not be saved. No one who has not been regenerated can, if the scriptures be true, enter into the kingdom of heaven. Of course those who die too young to meet with this change must be lost.

III. If the purpose of future punishment be the prevention of crimes, it is but poorly calculated to produce the effect proposed ; not only because it is not always inflicted on those who have violated good morals. and sometimes on those who have been guilty of no such offence, but because, in the first place, sufficient evidence of its infliction has not been given to man, to produce universal belief, and secondly, because man has much less care for his happiness in another world than in this.

When a ruler would prevent the commission of crimes, or the performance of other acts, by punishment, he should give his subjects such evidence of its infliction, as could not be doubted. It is of but little consequence whether the punishment is inflicted or not, provided all believe that it will be. It is not punishment that prevents crimes, but the fear of punishment. If the former exists without the latter, or if the latter may exist without the former, punishment is useless, for in the latter case the good effects would not arise from it, and in the other none would exist.— But, of the punishment to be inflicted on the guilty, in a future world, no such conclusive evidence is given. It is, indeed, said that God has revealed to us the conditions on which our safety depends, but that this revelation is not sufficiently well established for the purpose of preventing the acts forbidden by it, may be inferred from the number of those who have disbelieved it. The miracles, by which the existence of this revelation is proved, were performed in a small pro-

vince of the Roman Empire, and only at one period of time ; it is impossible, therefore, that sufficient evidence of their performance, to produce universal assent, should be given in distant times, and nations, and we find accordingly, that the tales concerning them, have been rejected by the greatest part of mankind. The evidence of the existence of any event is weakened, the further it is removed from the time and region in which it took place. Of all the nations on the earth, the Jews had the greatest evidence of the miracles performed by Christ, yet they disbelieved. The miraculous feasts given by our Saviour to the multitude must have been proved to them by five thousand witnesses, while to us they are attested only by four. If these four are of themselves sufficient proof, the infidelity of the Jews, their disbelief of the five thousand, must be so incredible as to excite our doubt.\*—What then could Christians, if Jews were so sceptical, expect from other nations. Nothing but the rejection of their religion, nothing but a doubt of the performance of those miracles, and of the revelation introduced by them. And what else, I may ask, has, in most nations, been the result.

But if the infliction of future punishment on the guilty, was proved by the most indubitable evidence; it would still be insufficient for the purpose of preventing crimes, because men have less regard for their happiness in a future world than in this. We are so constituted that we cannot disregard our future fate, while on earth, but I believe that men may be perfectly indifferent, as to the fate of their souls ; at least there are persons who have but little regard for them.

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\* The Christians assert that the evidence of the performance of the miracles of Christ, is as great as the evidence of the performance of the deeds of Cæsar or Alexander. But what would our opinion be if we were told by all the historians, that the people of Rome, in the age of Cæsar, and for half a century after, could not be made to believe that any battle had been fought at Pharsalia.

Men, who believe that death without repentance is succeeded by eternal and infinite misery, frequently prefer the pleasures (few as they are) which may be derived from sin, to the security of their salvation; they choose to put off the repentance, on which their future happiness eternally depends, to an uncertain old age, and brave the danger of a death without grace, rather than relinquish the vanities which are inconsistent with the christian faith. A punishment which is so little regarded, is certainly not well calculated to prevent the commission of those acts of which it is the penalty. It is certain that it does not prevent the commission of crimes, for we have criminals enough in christian countries, and among christians themselves, and it is no less certain that God might have prevented every vicious act, with a small part of the punishment threatened, if it had been inflicted in this life. If every crime was attended immediately with torture equal to burning, for the space of one day, we should have no criminals, but all the pains of hell, inflicted on the guilty in a future life, leave us many, and would leave us more, if this was all the punishment they must expect. If, (as God might have done,) he had so arranged the laws of nature, that he who diminished the happiness of another, should himself be deprived of thrice as much, all would have been benevolent; men would have shunned an act which would injure another, as they now shun the flames, not because it was unjust so much as because it was injurious to themselves. It had therefore been wise in God, if his purpose was to prevent any act which he might forbid, to have punished our offences in this world, in such a manner that the infliction of the punishment might have been the object of experience, or to have given us better evidence of the existence of that punishment, in a future state, and a higher regard for our welfare in the world to come.

W. It is said by the christians, or by some of them,

that the man who has refused to obey the command of God, and to worship him in the manner which he has directed, has sinned against his maker, an infinite being, shown himself ungrateful to God, is infinite in guilt, and deserves infinite punishment.

Admitting that men are in duty bound to be grateful to God, and to obey his commands, it is still necessary, in order to justify the punishment, of his ingratitude, that this punishment should prevent, or tend to prevent it, and that the ingratitude thus prevented be such as would, if it existed, be a greater evil than the punishment. But gratitude is not subject to the will, it is not a voluntary state of the mind, it controuls the will, but is not controuled by it, of course it cannot be affected or changed by rewards or punishments, any further than they excite a hatred of him who inflicts the punishment, and a love for him who gives the rewards. If a man be ungrateful, his ingratitude cannot be removed by force; you may indeed compel him to do things which none but the grateful would willingly do, but he is still destitute of gratitude, his heart being unchanged, and his performance against his will.—God may compel by his punishments, his most ungrateful creatures to obey his commands, but he cannot force their hearts to love, which is the gratitude that he requires. With unwilling obedience he can never be pleased, he sets no value upon it, for he hath no need of the service of men, nor even of the angels. A human ruler is satisfied when his servant has obeyed his commands, however unwilling this obedience may be, because the service done is all that he regards; he may use punishments and rewards, because they regulate the acts of men, by which he is profited and gratified. But the case is different with God. It is the heart which he searches, it is love and gratitude which he requires, (not the acts of love and gratitude,) and as these cannot be produced by punishment, the punishment of those who possess them not, would be but an

useless evil. It would even be worse than useless ; punishment excites hatred, and of course would make the evil worse. If God would change the ingratitude of men to love, he may best do it by increasing their happiness. The saints indeed he may cast into hell with safety, because their love is fixed, and would doubtless continue the same ; but as for those who love him not, he had best not punish them, lest their hatred should be increased, but reward them that it may be removed. Or if this should not please him, he might, by an act of his omnipotence, plant a sense of gratitude in their hearts, but all punishment of the ungrateful must be misery inflicted on them in vain.

V. But admitting that the punishment of ingratitude would make men grateful to God, we cannot believe (say the infidels) that the ingratitude thus prevented, could be, if it existed, as great an evil as the punishment of so many as are devoted to destruction by the christian religion. It may be indeed, that God regards the least offence or injury offered to him, more than the eternal misery of a human soul, yet we cannot conceive that he regards the opinions of men, so highly, as to devote them to eternal damnation, for their hatred or disrespect of him. We are no more than dust and ashes in his sight. Our hatred cannot disgrace him, it can do him no harm ; our love, our worship, our adoration, can add nothing to his glory, they can do him no good. Can we believe then, that he will so far notice our thoughts, as to punish us for disrespect to his character, especially when we reflect, that he himself created us, and must be the cause of that very disrespect, if it exists. The enmity of the loftiest angel, could not in the least injure him ; can we then believe that he would war with man ; can we conceive that he should esteem our hatred an evil, and if he does not, why should he torture us to gain our esteem. To say that he will punish with eternal misery, a delinquent in his worship, is to impute to him, a tyranny, which

could only arise from such fear and jealousy, as could not be excused in a human monarch, over whose head the sword was hanging by a single hair. What then must they be in God, or rather who shall dare impute them to him. When Napoleon was told that one of his ministers was a traitor, he only replied, I have made many ingrates. Had we not the testimony of the saints to the contrary, we should trust that the Almighty was not less noble than the emperor of France.

VI. But the greater part of those, who according to the principles of christianity, are to be placed on the left hand, at the judgement day, have never been ungrateful to God. The gospel leaves no hope of the salvation of the heathen—Yet these have shown the highest marks of gratitude, to those, to whom they believed, they owed their existence. Among the ancients, nothing was undertaken unless the Gods were first consulted. Prayers, sacrifices and thanks, were ever offered to them, with much greater alacrity than the christian pays his homage to God, and this at a time when it was not revealed, and of course could not be known, that our future state, depended on our conduct in this life. They indeed believed (though upon weak evidence) that those who were guilty of enormous impiety, would be punished in Tartarus, but to a trifling neglect of their divinities, no such penalty was affixed; a calamity on earth was a sufficient punishment for these offences, yet no such neglect was known. The Christians, though they know that their salvation depends on their worship of God, perform their duties to that holy being, with deplorable reluctance, and frequently put off (notwithstanding the danger of delay) their repentance to their old age, rather than spend the prime of their life in his service.\* But the heathen worshipped without hesitation, and was ready to adore

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\* The clergy are an exception to this. They wish to enter their master's service as early as possible.

his God in his youth. Many, if we may believe the assertions of historians, have suffered themselves to be sacrificed to their divinities, in the prime of their life. This, according to the accounts we receive, is the practice among the heathens of India, at the present day. Can we believe that these men are ungrateful to their creators, or to those whom they suppose to be such. But say the christians, their worship was not directed to the true God. This is doubtless correct, but it is to be imputed to their ignorance, not to their ingratitude; and surely they are not to be blamed for their ignorance, when God had never chosen to reveal himself to them. If they had the means of knowing their creator, and neglected them, it would be a fault, though not ingratitude; but while they possess not these means, no blame can be attached to their ignorance. If a person ignorant of his parentage, should pay those honors, which are due to a parent, to a person whom he erroneously supposed to be such, his filial piety would not be the less for his mistake. And if the ancient heathen paid divine worship to things which were not their Gods, supposing them to be such, they ought not for this error, to loose their reward.

VII. The scriptures assert, that he who believeth in Christ, the son of God, is not condemned, but that he who believeth not, is condemned, because he has not believed, on the only begotten son of God.

It would seem from this assertion, that the object of future punishment, is to make men believe, yet as our opinions are not voluntary, no punishment can have this effect. When inflicted by man, it may indeed make us hypocrites, though as every one knows, arguments alone can change our belief; but when it comes from God, it cannot have even this effect, for no one can hope to deceive him. It must be still further from affecting our belief, when as in the present case, we cannot believe in the existence of the punishment;

without possessing the very belief, which it is the object of that punishment to produce. No one who disbelieves the christian religion, can suppose that he will be punished for his unbelief; of course the fear of such punishment cannot change his mind. The punishment with which we are threatened for our want of faith, can only be seen through the eye of faith; it therefore alarms not those against whom it is denounced; and if their belief was subject to their will, the fear of this punishment, could never induce them to believe, for that fear could never exist, before the belief, which the punishment was designed to compel.

VIII. It is held generally by the christians, that the punishment which we are to suffer, is for our offences against God.

But the infidels say (and with truth too) that injury is the essence of offence, and that God, if he is omnipotent, cannot be injured. For an omnipotent being would, by the very act of his will, restore the universe and every thing contained in it, whether matter or spirit, to the state in which he wished them to exist, whenever they should for an instant, (were even that possible,) be changed from it. Otherwise his power would not be governed by his will, since that which he wished should be done, that which he can do, without labor, (for omnipotence implies, that he who possesses it, can perform any thing without labor, by the mere act of his power,) still remains undone. The supposition that man has ever displeased God, implies that man is not such as he wishes him to be, consequently that his power is imperfect, for if it were not, he would have made the beings which he has created, such as he chose to have them, and would have kept them in that condition. Whoever dispraises man dispraises God, for if man be "but a filthy piece of work," it is his makers fault, and must arise either from his will or from some imperfection in his power. If then God has power to create man perfect, and to preserve him

in his perfection, he must (if the doctrine of future punishment be true) have intentionally created him imperfect, or have suffered him afterwards to become so, and is to damn him for this very imperfection of which he himself is the cause, or which he has neglected to prevent.\* Can such a God be benevolent. The thing created must not, indeed, say to the creator, why hast thou made me thus. but shall the creator say to the thing created, why art thou thus made?

The potter hath indeed power over his clay, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor, yet let not the clay be called to account for the shape which he gives it. If he has formed a vessel, which will not answer the purpose for which it was made, he may destroy it, cast it from him, or alter it. but if it was susceptible of pain, he should not torture, unless this was the means of making it more valuable. If God has failed in making man such as he wished him to be, he may change him, and if punishment be necessary, in effecting this change, he may use it, but if he be omnipotent, he cannot have thus failed, and if he had he might alter his works without the use of pain.

IX. It is among the tenets of all christians, that man derives from the fall of Adam, a disposition to sin, which cannot be pardoned by God, without punishment on man, or on some being who may suffer that punishment for him. By this they attempt to remove the odi-

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\* Some writers, in order to do away these objections, tell us that God is not the cause of sin, but that it arises from his absence, as darkness arises from the absence of the sun. But if he was benevolent, would he not by his presence, if necessary, prevent the existence of this sin, when he could do it without labor. Is not he who neglects to prevent an evil, when he might do it without trouble, in foro conscientia, as guilty as he who causes that evil to exist. The Armenians do not think thus, when they say that, according to the doctrine of predestination, God is unjust, in punishing any part of mankind, and at the same time make him omnipotent.

um which would fall on God, had he created man originally bad. For we take it for granted, that had God designedly created man evil, given him a disposition which delighted in wickedness, and then should punish him for the crimes which he committed, he would, in a great degree, be guilty of man's destruction; though he had given him liberty to pursue that course which he should choose, and had punished him for choosing the evil. But by saying that God made man originally good and happy, and that he fell from this state by disobedience to the divine command, the christians hope to make their deity appear more just. There is a difficulty in conceiving how this could have been the case, for if Adam fell into a state of moral corruption, by disobedience to God's commands, this disobedience must have been previous to the fall, which it produced, that is, when Adam was in the state in which God created him. Now if this disobedience was evil, Adam's moral character could not at that time have been good, and if it was not evil, he should not have been corrupted thereby. It appears therefore, that man must have originally been created with a sinful and disobedient nature, or that he could not have fallen from his first state by sin and disobedience; sin can only arise from a sinful mind, the sinful disposition in man, could not therefore be caused by sin, for sin could not have first existed.

But, waving this objection, and supposing that man did in fact, fall from a state of goodness by sinning against God—I cannot conceive that God may be excused (if he is omnipotent as the scriptures teach) for suffering him thus to fall, or for not restoring him after his fall. Or allowing the christians the most favorable suppositions, there is no reason why this corruption should be extended to his seed. And if there be any necessity of this, in the nature of things, with which we are unacquainted, it were better that God had entirely destroyed the old race of Adam, and inhabited

the earth with a new created stock. When God destroyed all the people of the earth for their sins, except Noah and his sons, it had been better, had he taken these righteous persons also to himself, and peopled the world with men who were not corrupted by the disobedience of Adam.

X. Whatever be its object, any punishment by God is an unnecessary evil, because an omnipotent being can have no need of means to effect his purposes, since they may be brought about solely by the act of his will. The definition of omnipotence is, that whatever the being who possesses it wishes, must take place in consequence of his will. Every thing that exists must therefore be agreeable to the will of him who is omnipotent, or it could exist no longer. No evil can be suffered to remain in existence by such a being, because a greater evil would follow its destruction, for as he is master of the laws of nature, he can prevent all consequences. No evil would be created by him that a greater might be destroyed, for whatever he dislikes might be destroyed without means.

Whatever exists, must be willed by him for itself, and not for its effects. If he punishes it must be because he delights in punishment. It is in vain to say, that he inflicts this on the wicked, in consequence of their crimes, for if he wished not their misery, he would have prevented those crimes, whose existence, instead of justifying his punishments, only add to the impeachment of his goodness. If man should live at peace on earth, and at their death, the same portion should be delivered to destruction, they would in the whole be more happy, than if they contended with each other on earth, and suffered the same miseries after death. If after being made miserable by crimes on earth, we should all be admitted to happiness, in a future life, it would alleviate the troubles to which we were created. But if God has created us to troubles

here, and is to destroy a part of us, for the existence of those troubles, he afflicts us with a double evil.—He, therefore, who attempts to justify future punishment, by the crimes which are committed on earth, only adds to the evil which lies at God's door, and he who would excuse him for suffering crimes to exist on earth, by saying that the guilty will be punished in a future world, does the same. For certainly, God if he chose could prevent the commission of crimes on earth, and the punishment of the guilty, is no more justifiable, than the punishment of the righteous, when it does not tend to prevent crimes. Though God has no need of means, say the christians, he may use them if he chooses, and if in his infinite wisdom, for reasons with which we are unacquainted, he has determined to effect his purposes, and govern the world by them.—This is true, still if God uses those means, which are in themselves evil, and which make his creatures miserable, he cannot be considered as benevolent, but as delighting in misery.

XI. It is said by the christians, that God has an absolute right of preservation and destruction over man, because man owes to him his existence. If this doctrine be true, and we grant that it is, it follows that there is no justice between man and God. Because God has a right to punish those who have not offended, as well as those that have; he may destroy the innocent as well as the guilty, since they are the property of him who created them. God cannot with any propriety be said to be just to man, for nothing that he could do to him, would be unjust. Where there is justice, there must be some reciprocal obligations, otherwise one party has no motive for adhering to it, and to the acts of another it sets no limits. Admitting then as we do, that God may determine what fate for us he chooses, there is no justice between man and him.

Yet this absolute right, or rather power of God, over

us, does not arise so much from the act of creation, as from God's omnipotence. The fact that God created us, would afford no motive for submitting to such a right, if we had power to resist it. If indeed there were many Gods, of equal power, each having creatures of his own, they might find it convenient to suffer each to proceed in his own way. in the government of his own creatures, and to leave those beings to the fate, which their creators might determine for them, whether it were happiness, misery, or annihilation, each one being induced to observe this obligation, that the others might act in the same manner towards him. But the act of creation, can by no means induce the being created to submit to the unlimited power of his creator, if he has power to resist, though it might induce another God to leave him to his fate. All obligations must, as I have said before, be reciprocal. One man is bound not to destroy or injure another, on condition that the other shall not destroy nor injure him. He is bound to do others good, on condition that others shall do the same by him. The son is bound to obey the father, on condition that the father shall support him. But there can be no reciprocal obligations, which would induce one being to submit to the unlimited controul of another. Still, as God is infinite in power, he must have unlimited sway over all beings, whether his creatures or not, for between him and other beings there can be no reciprocal obligations by which he may be restrained in his conduct; they can neither be bound not to injure him, nor to do him any favor, for they can do neither. God of course can have no obligation towards any being, which he has any motive for regarding. Yet we are not to suppose that God will punish us unnecessarily, though he can be under no obligation for saving us. We do not conceive him to be a being who delights in the destruction of his creatures, nor can we perceive that any useful purposes, requires the futuro punishment of any part of mankind.

XII. The christians (or at least a part of them) affirm, that though God is infinitely merciful, he cannot, on account of his justice, pardon man his sins against him, except through the expiation of the blood of Christ. But this is a kind of justice, which the infidels cannot understand. They believe that every being may forgive his own injuries, provided such lenity does not tend to encourage crimes against others, without any violation of justice. If it would not be just for God freely to pardon man, he must be obligated to some being who would be injured by the act, not to grant such pardon. But what beings are there, in the first place, who would be injured by the pardon of man. If it be supposed that there are any such, it is a hypothesis, improbable in itself, and without a shadow of proof. The angels cannot be injured by such pardon, for they praise God eternally for devising means by which it might be effected. And if any being were thus injured, could not God, by his infinite power, provide a remedy, without shedding the blood of his only begotten son.

But God, as we have before shown, can be under obligations to no being. If any one is injured by his acts, they are his creatures and must suffer without complaint, because he has a right not only to injure, but to annihilate them. If then they should suffer by the pardon of man, they cannot call God unjust, for he is not bound to act for their welfare ; they must endure in silence, or glorify God, even while he afflicts them.

XIII. Admitting that man is infinite in guilt, and that justice requires his punishment, the infidels cannot conceive, how the death of Christ can expiate that guilt. They believe that the innocent should never suffer for the guilty, and if man before the death of our holy saviour, was so sunk in guilt that God in his infinite mercy, could not pardon him, they cannot believe that he could be more easily forgiven, when he had

added to his other crimes, the murder of the son of God. According to such principles of justice, a man condemned for murder, might inflict the penalty of the law upon some innocent person, expiate his guilt by another's blood, and go himself unpunished. Thus one murder might be expiated by the commission of another.

The infidels indeed, regard this doctrine as more absurd and ridiculous, than that of transubstantiation. But here they err, by seeking to penetrate too far into the mysteries of the divine government. The justice of God it seems was such, that man, who had offended him, could not be forgiven without blood. Man had offended him, vengeance was his due, he could not in consistency with his justice decline it, though his mercy was infinite. He sends his son upon earth; that son dies upon the cross, by the hands of man; this crime committed by man, (compared with which his offences must be trifles,) saves him from the wrath of God.—When Christ had died the death of a criminal slave, infinite\* misery had been suffered; it was sufficient. The debt of blood was paid. The almighty Shylock had obtained his pound of flesh,† not from him who owed it, not from his enemy, but from the body of his son. With this he was satisfied, and man, with due submission, might be forgiven. I acknowledge that these things are marvelous in our eyes, but we are not permitted to doubt.

These are the principal arguments which the infidels have brought, or may bring, against the justice of God, as taught in sacred writ. I must acknowledge,

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\* Because suffered by an infinite being.

† Shylock, however, never imagined that he was obliged to take his pound of flesh, whether he would or not. But according to Christian justice he had no option. he must have taken it from Antonio or some other, even if his mercy had been as infinite as that of God.

with deep regret, that they appear to me but too powerful, and thus far unanswered. The christians endeavor to defend their doctrine, by asserting that by natural reason we know nothing of the character of God, that for this reason we must look to revelation, for all information concerning him, and the nature of his government. If therefore, say they, it be proved that we have received a divine revelation, we are to receive it with implicit faith, though the government of God as taught therein, should not agree with our notions of justice. For we, being born in ignorance of the divine nature, cannot rely upon our speculation concerning it, but must look to God's word for all information relating to his character.

It is acknowledged that by nature we know nothing, or little, of the character of God, but we have more information concerning the nature of justice, and if it be said that it requires the punishment of a portion of mankind, for certain offences. we may judge whether this be true or not, by reason unguided by revelation. Whether justice has any relation to God or not, might indeed be doubted at a time when we were destitute of revelation. If it were said, that God would pursue a certain course in his government, which we might deem inconsistent with justice, without affirming that such conduct was agreeable either to justice or benevolence. or that these were attributes of God, we should possess no means of proving that such assertion was not true. But when it is affirmed, that justice requires that he should pursue such a course, that such is agreeable to benevolence, the question no longer relates to the character of God, but to the nature of justice and benevolence, concerning which we are certainly qualified to judge.

There can be no complete proof of the existence of any revelation. Moral evidence never amounts to demonstration. There is always room for arguments on

the other side. As the infidels cannot believe that God would give us a revelation inconsistent with itself, they suppose that inconsistencies, when found in any pretended revelation, forms a proof that it is not from God, and they hold the assertion, that God is just and benevolent, and that he will not pursue a course in his government, which when examined, is found inconsistent with justice and benevolence, (though it may be asserted by the advocates of the revelation that it is not,) is such an inconsistency, and proves, that those who assert it have not their doctrines from God.

But here the christians may again object, that the justice of God is not like that of man. That the justice of God may differ in some respects from that of man, on account of the difference of their natures, is readily acknowledged. In reasoning concerning the justice of God, we must make allowance for his superior power and wisdom. Yet if he possesses any quality, which may be called justice, it must bear a strong analogy to the justice of men, otherwise there would be no propriety in distinguishing them by the same word. If the justice of God be said to differ from ours, so much that we cannot safely reason concerning it, it may with as much propriety be said, that the punishment of God, or that mentioned in the scriptures, may differ from that of man in so great a degree, that we can know nothing of its nature, not even whether it be a pleasure or a pain. The same might be said of all other words used in sacred writ. It might be affirmed, that used by holy writers, and applied to holy things, they have a meaning different from that we attach to them, when applied to the things of this world, for if justice when applied to God, means different from what it does elsewhere, the same may be the case with other words.

The christians affirm, that as reason sometimes leads us astray. we should not place too great reliance upon

it, especially when it leads us to conclusions contrary to revelation. I have no hesitation in admitting, that our reason is exceeding liable to error, still as it is the only guide we have in our search after truth, we must trust it. If what our reason tells us is true, is sometimes found to be false, it is no reason for our believing that which it tells us is false.

I may be told that the scriptures are of a higher authority than reason; this cannot be true, for it is only by reason, that we learn the divine origin of the scriptures, and if that be doubted, our conclusion, that the scriptures contain the word of God, must likewise be held doubtful. In fine, I must esteem those the enemies of christianity, who would separate it from reason.\*

Though the above objections of the infidel, have remained so long without a satisfactory answer, I flatter myself that I have invented one, which will silence them forever. It is now presented to the attention of the reader.

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\* It is the opinion of many pious men, that christianity is supported, not by reason, but by a special exertion of the power of God. Its doctrines, say they, are nonsense to the unconverted soul, and of course can be received by none, through a conviction of their truth, unless they are convinced by the act of God. I am myself, when I view the absurdities with which pretended Christians have loaded our sacred religion, sometimes inclined to attribute its preservation to a miraculous interference of providence in its favor. It seems impossible that men, not compelled by the power of God, should believe doctrines so contrary to reason and common sense. Yet when I reflect that other religions, whose tenets are little less absurd than those of Christianity, have stood as long, and braved with success, as great opposition as ours, I attribute the triumph of each of them, to the blindness of man in discovering truth, and distinguishing it from error. But I would give our religion a firmer base, by striking from it all absurdities. I would make reason its support, instead of its enemy. By cutting from the tree all its rotten branches, I would give it new life and vigour. This I flatter myself, I shall perform, in the following chapter, and if in doing it, too little should be suffered to remain, the fault as the reader will perceive, will not be mine.

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **ANSWER TO THE FOREGOING OBJECTION, TO THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

It will be seen that the arguments of the infidels, as I have given them above, are based on the supposition that God cannot, or will not, be the author of a communication, which is not true.

God declares (if we may take the scriptures for his word) that he is just and benevolent; he declares at the same time, that he will pursue a certain course in his government; this, when examined, is found inconsistent with justice and benevolence. One or the other of these assertions must therefore be false. But may it not be false and at the same time from God?—No, say the infidels, God is too holy and too pure a being, to utter that which is false; he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should not regard his word.

But these assertions are not to be received without some proof of their truth, nor do I believe that any can easily be given. I have shown in a former part of this work, that no complete evidence of the justice, benevolence, holiness, or purity of God, can be derived from any source, except revelation, because it is not impossible, that just such a world as ours, and just such a creature as man, should be created by a being who possessed neither of those qualities. There are

some things in the universe indeed, which justify the conjecture, that God is benevolent, but the argument that may be derived from them, amounts not to demonstration. They might all have been so created, by a being who had no regard for the welfare of his creatures. If we cannot, by natural reason, prove God's justice, holiness, and benevolence, it is plain that we cannot prove his truth; if he has not these qualities, he may be the author of a communication that is false.

There is nothing in the universe, visible to us, which could not be created by a being who might deceive his creatures. No proof then of God's truth, can be brought from this source; if there can, I would thank these infidels to point it out. He who does this will deserve the reputation of a genius, and the honor of refuting the doctrines of the christians, for when it is proved that God cannot deceive, it must be acknowledged that the scriptures are the work of man, and that we are imposed upon by human impostors.

If no evidence of God's truth can be derived from the light of nature, it is plain that none can be derived from revelation. His truth must be established before his revelation can be received. The witness must not be allowed to establish his own veracity, it must be proved from other evidence.

Admitting then, as we do, that the infidels have proved the doctrine of the scriptures false, and inconsistent with itself, it does not follow that it did not come from God. If the course which the scriptures declare that God will pursue in his government, is inconsistent with justice and benevolence, it may be falsely said, that he possesses these qualities, or it may not be true that he will pursue that course, and still both assertions be from the most high.

Though we have no proof of the justice, holiness,

and benevolence of God, piety (not reason) compels us to believe, without evidence, that he possesses those qualities, but when all this is admitted, we cannot prove his truth ; we have still no evidence that he cannot, or that he will not, deceive us. Deception is by no means inconsistent with these attributes, as it will not be difficult to show.

Let us begin with God's justice, is deception inconsistent with this ; is it unjust in God to deceive us. I have already shown that we have no proof from nature, that there is any quality belonging to God, that we may denominate justice. It may be as improper to affirm, that he is either just or unjust, as it is to affirm that he is black or white. Acts with him are not (so far as we know) to be divided into classes which are just or unjust. But if he possesses any quality which we may call justice, it is such impartiality in the distribution of happiness, as induces him to bestow it equally on all beings, so far as the welfare of the whole, and the nature of his purposes, will permit. But is there any thing in this inconsistent with deception. The answer must be that there is not, as far as we can behold. It may indeed be, that for reasons which we know nothing of, a deception of any of God's creatures would destroy such impartiality, or it may be, that this same quality in God. requires that we should be deceived. It may be, that God will make happiness more equal, by giving us a false communication, or it may be that such an act would have a contrary effect. Our conclusion then is, that God's justice. or impartiality, is neither an objection to, nor a support of, the doctrine of his truth.

As for holiness, when applied to God, it can mean nothing more than justice and benevolence, if any thing more than the latter. We can conceive no other qualities in God, to which that name can be applied.— But it is of the greatest importance to reconcile this

doctrine to God's benevolence, the noblest attribute of the deity. There is something so sublime in contemplating a God, who is happy in giving happiness, that, if my doctrine was inconsistent with this, I should immediately renounce it. But no such inconsistency exists. Our own happiness, or the happiness of other beings, may require that God should deceive us.

If God has given us a false communication, the effects of this act on earth, is the existence of the christian religion. To know whether the establishment of that religion, be consistent with benevolence or not, let us ask if its effects have been beneficial to man. If they have been so its establishment was a benevolent act, if not, to render it such, its founder must have proposed some other object, which might counterbalance the evil.

If a benevolent God established the christian religion, he must have done it for the good of man, of other beings, or for some important purpose of his own. If he established it for the good of man, its effects (if he has not failed in his purpose) must have been, or must yet be, beneficial. Let us now enquire if this has been, or will yet be, the case.

I have already said, and I trust convinced the reader, that the general, and apparent effects of christianity, have been injurious to the happiness of man, and that we may expect they will be the same in future.—That this religion is in fact, well calculated to produce contentions among men, to throw power into the hands of those who will abuse it, to hold men in slavery to priests, and prejudice ; while it produces few beneficial effects, to counterbalance these evils. I know there are some, who affirm, that the evils which have arisen from christianity, are to be attributed to its abuse, and that when rightly used, it produces benefits alone. To these I shall only answer, that absolute monarchy would not be the worst of governments, if it

was never abused, that is, if the monarch was always wise, and would act for the good of his people. But the liability of both monarchy, and christianity, to abuse, is the very evil of which we complain.

But though the general effects of christianity are evil, its accidental effects may be different, and God may have established it for these. By accidental effects, I mean, such as can never be foreseen, or predicted from their causes, except by beings of more than human knowledge. Man, in fact, can seldom discover their origin, even after they have taken place, and as he can never foresee them, he cannot regard them in the regulation of his conduct. The murder of a tyrant, may sometimes give room for the advancement of one still more tyrannical, to the throne. The murder of a good king may, (even if the monarchy is not destroyed,) prevent the reign of a tyrant, but as these effects cannot be foreseen, we should not therefore murder an amiable prince, or suffer a tyrant to live. But though man cannot regard these effects, in the regulation of his conduct, God who can foresee them, in his superior wisdom, may regard them in the regulation of his. The accidental effects of the christian religion, may, as I have said, be beneficial, though its general effects are injurious. These would not justify man for its establishment, because he could not possibly foresee them, but they would justify God.— If he saw that the accidental effects of an act, which man would reject as evil, were good, he would, in consistence with his benevolence, adopt it; if he saw that an act, the general effects of which were good, would accidentally produce evil, he would reject it. The establishment of our sacred religion, appears to us to have greatly increased the miseries of the human race, yet its accidental effects may have been beneficial to man. It may have prevented the existence of a religion still more injurious; it may, in fact, have freed man, by tightening the chains of tyranny till they have

burst. God may have established it for these benefits. My arguments may be repeated in a few words. Though the christian religion has produced many evils, had it not existed, the condition of man might have been worse than it is ; God therefore may have established it for the good of mankind.

It is likewise possible, that God may have established christianity, for the good of other beings, for we have no proof that it will not add to their happiness. He may have important purposes of his own to effect, which would justify its establishment, even though it should injure all his creatures. There is one more hypothesis, which I will venture to suggest, as the most probable of all. God may have established our religion, for the purpose of obtaining the love and worship of man. Previous to the coming of Christ, the homage of all mankind, except the Jews, was directed to false Gods. Christianity taught them to whom their love and worship was due, and the result is, that a great part of the earth acknowledge and adore the true God. We know that christianity has increased the worship of God on earth, but whether that was his purpose in establishing it or not, we cannot, with equal certainty, say.

After what has been said, I believe none will affirm, that God could not establish the christian religion, consistently with his benevolence. It may indeed be true, that the effects of that religion are injurious to all God's creatures, but we have no proof that they are. To assert that its establishment was required by benevolence, is a hypothesis, but it is no less a hypothesis to suppose that it is inconsistent with that noble attribute of God.

If God may, consistently with his benevolence, have established christianity, he may certainly have given us a communication, though false, which is attended by

no effect, except the establishment of that religion.— That the scriptures have had, or will have, any other effect on earth, cannot be pretended. If it be said that being false, they must produce, if communicated to us by God, evil among other beings, the assertion is plainly hypothetical. We conclude therefore that the scriptures, though it should be proved that they are false, might have been given us by God, in consistence with his acknowledged benevolence. But says one, what evidence have we that they were given by God, your arguments only prove that this is possible. If you cannot prove that God is their author, you are giving us but hypothesis.

I answer, the proof of any communication from God, must be derived from miracles. The christians assert that the scriptures have been communicated to us from God, that their divine origin is proved by miracles, which are attested by many witnesses. The infidels reply, that they have proved these same scriptures to be inconsistent with themselves, and consequently false, and they would infer from this that they were the productions of human beings. Against this inference I object, because, as I have endeavored to prove, we may as well suppose God to be the author of a communication that is false, as of one that is true. If the assertion of the christians, that the scriptures were communicated to us from God, and those of the infidels, that those scriptures are false, are (as I am inclined to think) well founded, then it is proved that God has given us a false communication, if not, such supposition is indeed nothing more than a hypothesis.

But it still may be asked, (when it is granted that the scriptures are false,) in what part lies the falsehood. They declare that God is just and benevolent, and at the same time, that he will punish a part of mankind. It is asserted by the infidels, that this declaration is inconsistent with itself. Which of these inco-

sistent assertions is false. I answer undoubtedly the the latter. We are not allowed by piety to believe that God is unjust, or wanting in benevolence. Why then has he declared that he will punish us, if this declaration be false. For the same purpose for which he has made this declaration, if it be true, to establish our sacred religion. And why should he wish to establish this. For reasons of which we are ignorant. Perhaps for our own good ; perhaps for the good of other beings ; but still more probably, for the purpose of obtaining our love and worship. Here I anticipate an objection from the infidel ; why, says he, should he threaten to punish us, if his purpose is to obtain our love : can love be produced by the fear of punishment. I have already shown that the christian religion has increased our love to God ; if the fear of punishment has assisted to establish that religion, my answer is given. It is true that such fear cannot change our belief, when it is once fixed, and all the arguments relating to the question, understood ; but when our opinion is not fixed, it may induce us to examine ; examination may produce belief. It may induce us not to examine the arguments of the infidels, and this partiality is extremely favorable to christianity, it has retained many in the belief of our sacred religion.

But God, it may be said, is omnipotent. If he wished to establish the christian religion, he could have done it without deception ; if he wished to obtain our love, he could do it by the very act of his will. Why then should he choose to give us a communication that is false.

To this I answer, we are not to dictate to God the means which he shall use in effecting his purposes.— But still what proof have we that God is omnipotent ; none from nature ; our only evidence is derived from the scriptures, and until it is proved that God can speak nothing but truth, this cannot be received. It

is probable that God has declared himself omnipotent, the better to excite our admiration.

One objection yet remains ; what, the infidel may ask, according to your doctrine, was the use of the death of Christ ; he certainly could not have suffered to expiate our guilt. He certainly could not ; but we have no proof that he really suffered any pain ; it is more probable that he did not. The Unitarians maintain that Jesus, whom they suppose to be no more than a prophet, died to confirm his doctrine. Their enemies reply, that the truth of religion is not confirmed by the death of its founder. This remark is just. A philosopher who had lived in the time of Jesus, would have supposed that his death would neither have confirmed nor established his religion. But subsequent ages may perceive that the result has been different. Jesus died, and his religion prevailed ; had he lived, its fate had probably been different. This effect of the death of Jesus, God might have foreseen, though it could not have been expected by man ; and for this Jesus might have died. We have done with the infidel, but the christian may object to my doctrine. He may imagine that I am making too great innovations in our common religion ; he may even brand me with the name of heretic. This is more than I can bear ; I must prevent it by addressing some arguments to his consideration.

The doctrine, which I have endeavored to explain, is, that though God has declared in the scriptures, which are a communication from him, that those who do not repent of their sins, and accept the expiation of Jesus Christ, or in other words, all those who are not regenerated, shall be punished with eternal and infinite misery, in a future world, that punishment will never be inflicted, but that all will probably after death be admitted to infinite bliss. According to the doctrine of those with whom I am now contending, God has not

only declared that he will punish the unrepenting, but he will make good his word. Let us compare these two systems ; that which is most favorable to the benevolence of God, we will receive, the other we will reject, unless it shall be found to possess advantages in other respects which shall make it just for us to prefer it.

It is easy to show, that the effects of the promise of God, of which I have just been speaking, that the wicked shall be punished in a future life, if they do not repent, must be the same on earth, whether that promise be true or false ; since its truth can never be tested by man, while in this world. We cannot discover while on earth, whether this promise be true or false, since the punishment is not perceived by us, before death, unless it be through the eye of faith ; but by this it may be perceived, if it is never to exist. I have said in another place, that it is not punishment itself, but the fear of punishment, that affects the conduct of men ; and as punishment in a future life can never be seen by man, the fear of it can only be caused by a promise that it shall be inflicted ; but this promise must produce the same fear, whether it be fulfilled or not, since its fulfilment can never be seen by man. If there was a government, which inflicted the penalty of its laws, in so secret a manner, that it could never be known whether the criminal was punished or pardoned, he might as well be suffered to escape, provided his pardon might be made as great a secret as his punishment. In either case, the only fears which others would have of punishment, should they commit crimes forbidden by the laws, would arise from the fact that the laws annexed a penalty to such acts, but the enforcement of the laws (if they were enforced) would be useless, since it could never be known. The criminal might be pardoned with safety, because his pardon, as it could never be discovered, could not encourage others to commit crimes. The punishment of

the wicked in a future state, if it be intended to affect the affairs of this world, is a case similar to the one mentioned above. As it is not perceived by those beings whose conduct it is intended to regulate, it can produce no effect on them. It may indeed be made known by a revelation, but as its infliction cannot cause such revelation to be the more believed, it is useless. When, after death, we appear at the bar of God, if we have committed any crimes, they are past; punishment can neither remedy nor annihilate them; it cannot prevent our committing new crimes, for it is too late for us to commit them; it cannot make others, who remain on earth, fear to commit them, for it is unseen by them. God may have promised them that it shall be inflicted on the wicked, but the fulfilment of that promise cannot add to our belief of its truth. Our misery therefore, if we are to suffer, can have no effect on the earth.

But what are its effects beyond the earth; of these we know nothing, they may be beneficial or they may be injurious; no argument can be drawn from them, either for or against the infliction of the punishment, which God has declared shall fall on the wicked, if they repent not.

So far then our two systems have equal advantages. Whether God has deceived, or whether he is to punish a part of mankind, the effects of his conduct are the same, so far as we know any thing of them, and beyond this, we know not which course is the most beneficial. But the infinite punishment of a part of mankind, is in itself an infinite evil. If God has deceived us, that deception in itself is no evil, nor do we know that it produces any injurious effects. If, then, it be a rule, that when two systems are equally probable in all other respects, we should adopt that which is the most agreeable to, and consistent with the benevolence of God, we must admit that it is more probable that

God should deceive, than that he should punish us ; for none can doubt that deception agrees best with his benevolence.

But, says the christian, you admit that God may find it expedient to promise to punish the wicked ; and when this promise is made, may he not fulfil it, to justify his veracity. Have we no reason to believe that he is incapable of falsehood or deception. To this I answer, that neither the motives which induce mankind to consider falsehood a vice, nor those which induce individuals to adhere to the truth, nor the reasons which cause us to trust the words of men, may be extended, or applied to God. There are two reasons why men consider falsehood a vice. The first is, if falsehood should become common, language, and with it all communication between men, would be destroyed. But there is no cause similar to this, for our esteeming falsehood in God dishonorable ; communication between him and man is of so little importance, that if it should be destroyed, it would not render the act, which caused its destruction, vicious. But a falsehood, that could not be discerned by men, before death, would not be attended with such effects ; since man could not learn till it was too late, that he was deceived.

Falsehood is also considered a vice among men, because the deception sometimes injures others, by inducing them to act in a manner inconsistent with their interest. This is no objection to God's deceiving us, because such deception may be sometimes beneficial, in which cases only, God (who in his superior wisdom can foresee when it will be beneficial and when injurious) would adopt it.

The motives which induce men to adhere to the truth, in their communications with one another, are, the fear of disgrace, benevolence, or a desire not to injure others, and conscience, or a desire of being vir-

tuons for the sake of virtue itself. The two first of these cannot prevent God from deceiving us, for he can never fear disgrace, and deception may, for ought we know, be a benefit to his creatures. But may it not be, that he will regard his word, on account of his love of virtue. To this I answer, that I know not what virtue he should have, except the love of his creatures, and that may induce him to deceive us.— But if there are any immutable principles of right and wrong, from which God cannot or will not deviate, it is certainly more consistent with them, for him to deceive us, than to punish us with infinite and eternal torment. The question is not now whether God has given us a false communication, or no communication at all; my present opponents admit that he has declared that he will punish a certain part of mankind; we are now enquiring whether this declaration be true or false, and it appears plainly to be more consistent with God's virtue, (of whatever nature we may suppose it to be) for him to deceive us than to fulfil it. But, says one, justice allows God to punish us, because we have sinned. If so may he not deceive us as a punishment for our sins. As God created us, says another, he has a right to do with us as he pleases; he may cast us into eternal torments, and even annihilate us, if he chooses: our life and our fate are in his hands, to be used as may seem fit in his eyes. If so shall we complain if he deceives us, when his purposes, or perhaps our own good, requires it. Whatever power he may have over us, shall we say that he may consistently with his virtue cast us into hell, and yet has no right to deceive us. If you say that he is no deceiver, may I not reply that he is no tyrant.

We are indeed to place some confidence in the words of men, whose characters are unimpeached, whose tales are consistent and probable, and who, as we suppose, have no interest in deviating from the truth, because experience has taught us, that truth is

generally more for their interest than falsehood, and that they, therefore, generally prefer it. But we have no experience concerning the character of God; it cannot therefore have taught us that he should prefer truth to falsehood.

I know it is the opinion of some, that we are induced to believe the testimony of other men, by a natural principle, which teaches us to place confidence in their words. Those who hold this opinion, support it from the fact, that children, when language is first understood by them, believe whatever is told them, with implicit confidence. These, say they, could not have concluded, from their experience, that men always speak the truth, for if their observation was sufficiently extensive to justify any inference, they must have been the witnesses of many falsehoods; nor is there any reason why early experience should induce them to believe that men always speak truth, and further observation correct this error, since they meet with nearly the same proportion of truth and of falsehood in infancy and in age. Still I believe that no natural principle, beyond the confidence which we place in our experience, is necessary to account for this phenomenon. A falsehood is lost on a child who is but partially acquainted with language, when a truth would be understood by him. He in fact can only learn a language from truth. If I tell a child that a chair which is placed before us, moves, if he knows the meaning of the word chair, and if the assertion be true, he gathers from it the meaning of the word moves, if he was before ignorant of it, but if the assertion be false, it is not understood, and the child cannot conclude from it, that men do always speak truth, because he would not know that it was not true.—Hence we need not wonder, that at the time, his knowledge of his native tongue was first obtained, he should believe all that is said, since before that time he could never know a falsehood. As in all other cases, he

must here learn the general rule, before he learns the exceptions.

If my adversaries should still hope to prove that God cannot be a deceiver, I would remind them that when they have effected this, they will have proved that the scriptures are not from God. I have already given the arguments by which the infidels maintain, that these writings are inconsistent with themselves, and I think these are incontrovertible. But waving these, it is asserted by Miciab, 1. Kings, xxii. "that God wishing to persuade Ahab to attack Ramoth Gilead, where he would be slain, sent a lying spirit into the mouth of all his prophets, that they might deceive him, by prophesying that he should succeed in his purposes." Did not God here use deception, and that too to effect the destruction of Ahab, whom he could easily have cut off by other means. As he had a right to destroy his own creatures, he seems not to have regarded the manner in which it was done, and none may complain if he chose such a method as pleased him best.

If these arguments shall be found sufficient to remove the doctrine of future punishment from the christian religion. I shall pride myself on having exonerated it from a load that weighed it down, and on having silenced some of the most powerful objections of the infidels. I shall also have delivered it from the tenets which were most injurious to mankind; for no one will torment himself, or others, for the good of their souls, when it is believed that after death all are to be admitted to equal happiness. For this I shall expect and deserve the thanks, not only of christians but of all mankind.

It may perhaps be objected to this inference, that as the supposition that God will not inflict on the unrepenting, the punishment which he has threatened, is only the most probable, and not capable of positive proof,

we ought to take precautions against the possibility of evil, and make the same preparations for our future state, that we would if we believed God would fulfil his promises to the uttermost. As it is possible that God will inflict the punishment of eternal woe on those against whom it has been threatened, those are in the safest condition to whom he has promised salvation, we should therefore endeavor to make ourselves of that number. But here lies the error; the condition of those whom God has said shall be saved, is not more safe than that of others. It is indeed possible that God as he has asserted, will punish the unregenerated, but it is equally possible, that he may have purposes which will justify and require the punishment of those to whom he has promised salvation. For fear that his church should be filled with hypocrites, God appears to have given the christian no advantage over the infidel.

### CHAPTER III.

#### SECOND OBJECTION—TO THE EVIDENCE OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MIRACLES, BY WHICH THE SCRIPTURES ARE PROVED TO BE A REVELATION FROM GOD, AND THE ANSWER TO THE SAME.

THE second objection to the divine origin of the scriptures, or rather to the evidence of their divine origin, which I shall notice, is one which has been brought forward by Mr. Hume, in his chapter on miracles, as well as by other philosophers. I do not refer to Mr. Hume's doctrine, that no testimony, except that of our senses, is sufficient to establish a miracle, or to justify the belief that it has existed. This doctrine has been sufficiently discussed by other authors. The objection which I shall here endeavor to refute, is that which he derives from the contradiction between the doctrines which are supported by the different miracles, which are said to have been performed at different times and in different regions. It is alledged (and very truly too) that the ancient heathen of Greece and Rome, the Persians, the Indians, the Mahometans, as well as the christians, all had, or have, their miracles, (miracles too which are very well attested,) by which their religions are supported. Only one of these religions can be true, and only one of them can be supported by miracles, if miracles do in fact prove their truth. All the miraculous tales, therefore, which are told by the advocates of one religion, are false, if

those related by the partizans of another, are true, and if the miracles of all, are equally well attested, we shall not know which to receive, since the evidence of one contradicts, if it does not destroy, the evidence of the others.

That other religions, besides the christian, are supported by well attested miracles, is not, and indeed cannot be denied. So well proved are the miracles performed by the heathen Gods, and their ministers, that the christians, in the primitive ages of the church, did not pretend to doubt their existence, but they endeavoured to prevent the effect, which they were intended to have upon the people, by asserting that they were performed by devils, or by beings who derived their power from the prince of the infernal regions. It was asserted that the images of the heathen Gods, were forced to acknowledge this, whenever any of the sacred relics were brought into their presence, and frequently by the prayers of the saints. Tertulian asserted that any christian might by his prayer, compel the image of the Goddess of the Moon, in Africa, to acknowledge itself a devil, and consents that if this should be tried, the christian who should fail in such an attempt, should immediately be put to death. Rollin considers this challenge, as very honorable to the christian religion; how far he is correct, the reader may judge for himself. The same author, in his ancient history, is compelled to acknowledge, that the answers of the heathen oracles, were some times true prophecies, and such as must beyond a doubt be miraculous. He accounts for this, by supposing that God wished mankind to be deceived for a time, and therefore gave these evil demons power to deceive them, by performing miracles, and foretelling future events.

I am not to determine whether the heathen Gods were or were not actually infernal beings; but I should imagine, that the united testimony of all the fathers,

ought to destroy the scepticism of the moderns, concerning the miracles which they performed. But independent of these, we have ample evidence of the existence of such miracles. Mr. Hume asserts, that the best attested event of this kind, is one recorded by Tacitus, viz. the cure of two men, the one blind, and the other lame, by the emperor Vespasian; one being cured by means of the monarch's spittle, the other by the touch of his foot. I may add, that the best attested prophecy with which I am acquainted, is that of the soothsayer, who foretold the death of Cæsar, on the ides of March. Plutarch, and every other ancient author, abounds in tales of miracles, which are proved by unexceptionable evidence, and of the existence of which there can be no more doubt, than of the existence of those which were performed by Christ, and his disciples. The infidels may then say with truth, that if religion stands upon miracles, the heathen stands as strongly as our own.

But the supposition that miracles are a proof of the religion, by the partisans of which they are performed, is the error on which this argument of the infidels is founded.\* So far are miracles from proving contrary doctrines, (as Mr. Hume asserts,) that they can possibly prove no doctrine whatever. They are in fact mere irregularities in nature, from which no inference can be drawn. These assertions may appear extraordinary, but it is not difficult to prove their correctness, even if we admit every first principle of belief, for which any metaphysician has contended.

Miracles are those events which happen but seldom, and cannot then be reduced to any known law of na-

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\* When the following answer was written, I thought it entirely original, but I have since found, that Mr. Campbell, whose Dissertation on Miracles I had not then read, has given an answer to the same objection, in some degree similar to mine.

ture. To those who hold that experience is the only principle from which truth can with safety be drawn, it will be easy to prove my former assertion, that no conclusion can be drawn from these. As they happen according to no known law, we can know nothing of their causes, and therefore from the existence of a miracle, can learn the existence of no previous event, which was its cause, and as such miracle is an event which, taking into consideration the manner of its production, we have never before experienced, we can form no certain predictions as to its effects. For instance, if a child be born of a virgin, as this child differs in its birth from any thing we have before known, we shall not know, if we take experience for our guide, that he will not differ from others in his life and powers; for though we have learned from experience, the nature of children in general, and what may be expected from them, we have no experience concerning children born of virgins, and therefore do not know whether they will or will not resemble others.

But if we are to make any conclusion concerning the effects of miracles, we must take them to be the same as those of natural events, which come the nearest to the miracles in their nature, and not to suppose that they will have known effects, which no other events, according to our experience, can have. In other words, if we draw any conclusion from miracles, it must be drawn from the natural part of the events, and not from the miraculous circumstances which attend them; in the instance before mentioned, of the child born from a virgin, if we make any conjecture, concerning the future character of the child, it should be that it will be like other children, drawing our conclusion from the birth and existence of the child, which are the natural part of the event, and not from its birth from the virgin, which is miraculous, and concerning the effects of which we have no experience.

Again, let us take the instance of water which has

been turned into wine. Let its taste and look be like that of other wine, still we should not know but its effects might be different, since the cause and manner of its coming into existence, was such as we had never before known. Our conclusion concerning it, would be, that as in all its known qualities it resembled other wine, so far as we might conjecture, the effects of drinking it would be the same, but that as it differed in its origin from any wine that we had before known, its effects, without any violation of our experience, might be different from any thing we had before known ; it might be a poison, it might confer strength, it might cure diseases, it might not intoxicate, or it might intoxicate sooner than common wine. But we could never say, this wine was miraculously produced from water, therefore it will cure diseases, or therefore it is poisonous, for our experience can never teach us this.

But let us turn to the man, who has miraculously changed water into wine, who has raised the dead, or performed other miracles. What shall we say of him ; simply, that what we have experienced to be true of men in general, is not true of him, and that, therefore, we know nothing concerning his character. From the miracles which he performed, we can draw no inference, since we cannot have learned by experience, what must precede, or what must succeed them. We may still conjecture, that the man who has such power, possesses some qualities which are common to other men ; we may still believe, though with less certainty, that meat and bread are necessary to his existence, but we cannot say, because he has power to perform miracles, that he possesses certain other qualities, which other men do not possess. We cannot say, that because he has power to raise the dead, he must have a knowledge of future events, or that we can trust the more to his veracity, than to that of another ; we cannot even infer that he has power to perform other miracles. We cannot know from what

cause he obtained such power, because we should know of no causes that would produce such effects.

But the man, by a prophesy, has convinced us of his knowledge of the future. He may have convinced us of his knowledge of some future events, in this world, but this does not prove that he has a knowledge of all events, that are to take place on earth; much less of those which are to take place in the world to come.—As well might we assert, that a man's knowledge of some past events, should convince us, that he has a knowledge of all past events, and of our state before our birth.

But it is time that I should address my argument to those who do not suppose that experience is our only source of knowledge, but there are other primary principles of belief, which all mankind receive, as needing no proof. These I shall divide into three classes, and shape my argument according to their three different opinions. In the first class, I include those, who do not believe in the existence of God; in the second, those who believe in his existence; yet suppose that the laws of nature are so far independent of him, as not to require the continual support of his power; in the third, those who make God the immediate cause of every event, supposing that the laws of nature are nothing more than the general rules by which he regulates his acts.

I. Having premised thus far, I would observe, in the first place, that miracles do not prove the existence of God. It is the common opinion, that God is their immediate cause, but this is nothing more than a hypothesis. If we should admit that there is no God, we could not prove it impossible that there should be miracles; their existence could not be shown to be absurd. It is now universally acknowledged, that we know no reason, why events should take place, according to the common laws and courses of nature, except

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that by our experience we have found that they always take place in such order. We know no reason why motion should be communicated by impulse, or why matter should be attracted by matter, except that we have found by experience that such is the fact. If we had found on our coming upon earth, that impulse sometimes communicated motion, and sometimes did not, if the stones sometimes rose upwards, and sometimes fell downwards, if in fine we had found in events no such relation as that of cause and effect, it would have excited in us no surprise, for we should know no reason why the world should be governed by general laws, or why it should not.

If then after having learned the laws, by which the earth is governed, we should meet with an event which was directly contrary to them, all we could say would be, that we knew no reason why such an exception to those laws should exist, or indeed why it should not, except that it was contrary to our experience. Its existence might arise from laws which we had never discovered; but whatever might be its cause, its only effect on our minds, would be, to diminish our confidence in those laws, in which our experience had before taught us to trust.

II. Admitting that we have other proof of the existence of God, and that he is the author of the laws of nature, if agreeable to the second theory I mentioned above, he has made these laws so far independent of his power, that they do not require his continual support, there can be no evidence that miracles are his immediate acts. For as I have before stated, they may result from laws with which we never have been, and perhaps never can be, acquainted. That there may be laws unknown to us, cannot be doubted, when it is remembered that some laws have within a few years been discovered, which may produce events, that before those laws were known, would be regarded as miraculous. Miracles may be produced by laws,

which, operating "rarely in time, though frequently in eternity," can never be discovered by man. In the instance I have mentioned, of a child born of a virgin, there may be laws unknown to us, by which a virgin, under circumstances very rarely occurring, might bear children. It farther may be agreeable to nature, that a child thus born should possess all the powers attributed to the saviour of man. This is a hypothesis indeed improbable, but perhaps equally probable with any that can be found, to account for such events.

But, say these events are contrary to all laws known either to man or to beings of superior orders. Still it does not follow, that God must be their immediate cause. In establishing the laws of nature, he may have left them so far defective, that exceptions would sometimes arise to them, without any cause.

III. We come now to the third theory, mentioned above, that God is the immediate and efficient cause of every event that takes place, and that the laws of nature are no more than the general rules by which he regulates his conduct. If this hypothesis be true, miracles must indeed be the immediate acts of God.\*— Yet they may be produced like other events, agreeably to the laws of nature, or those rules which God has established for the regulation of his acts. They could not indeed be agreeable to those laws, which are known to man, for their name of miracles implies the contrary; but they may, as well as if we suppose the laws of nature to be independent of God, be agreeable to laws which we have never discovered, and perhaps

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\* A theory, however, might be formed, with considerable plausibility, which should make God the author of all events, happening agreeably to the laws of nature, and other beings, perhaps his enemies, the authors of miracles. I say with considerable plausibility, for there appears to be some reason when we make the laws of nature the rules by which God regulates his conduct, for supposing that other beings are the authors of events, which are not agreeable to those laws;

find that men use this member in deceiving others.—The faculty of memory must be as directly from God, as the power of foretelling events; why then may not a prophet be an impostor, as well as a man that remembers.

If the knowledge of the future, was as common among men, as the knowledge of the past, a prophecy would be no miracle, and would therefore, as is universally acknowledged, give the prophet no claim to our confidence, when he spoke of things beyond the world. If men in general had the power of raising the dead, controuling the mind, or the waves, all admit, that no inference concerning our future state could be derived from these facts; but how we can derive any knowledge from the single performance of an act, which we could not derive from, or which would be destroyed by the frequent repetition of that act, I am at a loss to conceive; one would suppose that if no knowledge of a future life could be obtained by seeing men frequently raise the dead, we could much less obtain any by seeing such act once performed.

But there are some reasons why we should trust less to the testimony of those who have power to perform miracles, when they pretend to a knowledge of a future life, and of the character of God, than to that of other men, pretending to the same knowledge. For, in the first place, we should have the more reason to fear that the man who had power to perform miracles, had attempted to deceive mankind, because he would have the greater prospect of success. Secondly, our experience teaches us to trust to the testimony of ordinary men, when their words do not appear improbable, because we have learned, by long observation, that such men most frequently speak truth, when they have no motives for falsehood; but experience has never taught us, that men who have power to perform miracles, prefer truth to falsehood; for they are beings with whom we have never been acquainted.

I shall without doubt be asked, why, if miracles prove no communication from God, man has always regarded them as the test of revelation. Why have men always placed implicit confidence in the testimony of men, who have power to perform miracles, if we have no more reason to trust their words than those of others. Why, in fine, if miracles prove nothing, if no conclusion can be philosophically drawn from them, have they been considered as the only means by which God can reveal his character to man. All this I shall be required to explain, before my doctrine can be received.

Before the existence of any religion, which could not be derived from nature alone, miracles would have been regarded by man in the same light in which I have viewed them, no one imagining that they proved a communication from God. But from causes which cannot be here discussed, religions sprung into existence; and as the Gods were supposed to possess power superior to that of man, it was of course believed that they could perform miracles. The poets, in their fictions, represented them as taking part in the battles of men, where they were known by the miracles which they performed. From this a miracle soon became the sign of a God. Men knew, or supposed they knew, that the Gods existed, that they had power to perform miracles, that men had not the power to perform them; when, therefore, they saw a miracle, they regarded him who performed it as a God. Other events were not, in those days, considered as the acts of the deities; for those beings were not supposed to have absolute controul over the laws of nature. But miracles they alone could perform. These events, therefore, indicated the presence of some God, as much as the footsteps of a human being in the sand, indicated the past existence of a man in that place. But had these been performed before the existence of any religion, they would have been viewed in the same

light in which the human track would be viewed by beings who had never been acquainted with man.\*

These remarks will enable us to refute another objection, which has been urged against our sacred religion. Why, it has been often asked with a sneer, did God suffer the world to be so long, or even for any time, overrun by the darkness of heathenism : why should God suffer so many millions of souls to perish by the worship of false Gods. Here too the infidel, who would hope by this question to confound the advocates of christianity, will find himself defeated.— We cannot fail to adore the wisdom of God, in permitting the heathen religion to overspread the nations of the earth, when we perceive how necessary the previous existence of that religion was, to the introduction of christianity. That it was thus necessary, I conceive that I have clearly proved, by what has been

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\* This, however, it must be acknowledged, was not the only reason of their belief. There is a principle in human nature, which delights in hypothesis, and which leads men to account for events which cannot be traced to known laws, and principles of nature, by the first hypothesis which their own reasoning, or the explanations of others, may suggest. It is for this reason, that superstition, when it finds an event which it cannot account for, always makes it the work of the Gods, this being the readiest hypothesis it can form. Thus eclipses of the moon and sun, rainbows, and other phenomena of the kind, before philosophy had discovered their causes, were considered as omens of good or bad events, given by the Gods. By the same cause, the people of the east have been led to conclude, that the earth rested upon the back of a turtle ; it is the same principle that induces christians to believe that the earth was created by an intelligent being ; and from the same cause, men, when they see a miracle performed, believe any hypothesis suggested to them by the performer, or others, to account for his power. In cases of extraordinary skill, derived from natural principles, men receive the testimony of the possessor, as to the manner in which that skill was obtained. This confidence ought to cease, when another person cannot receive the same power from the same cause.— But men are apt to extend it further, without any reason, and to believe, that he who possesses miraculous power, must have obtained it in the manner which he asserts.

said above. Had not that religion, or some other of the same nature, previously existed, the mighty miracles performed by Christ, and his disciples, had been exhibited to man in vain. Christ might have raised the dead, men had wondered, but they had still remained in ignorance ; he might have declared that he was the son of God, men would have answered, that the power of performing miracles did not prove his veracity. He might have prophesied, and his prophecies might have been fulfilled ; but this would not have proved that he knew aught of a future world. A voice might have been heard in the air, saying that he was the son of God ; men would have replied, that it was a new thing for a mind to inhabit the air, but that since a mind did inhabit it, they could trust no more to its words, then to those of one which inhabited a human body ; that they had regarded it as impossible for the air to possess a tongue, but that since it possessed one, that tongue might utter falsehoods, as well as the tongue of man. Angels might have come down from heaven, and declared Christ's divinity, and no one would have believed, if a religion previously established, without miracles, had not prepared men for belief. Shall we then dispute the wisdom of God, in having suffered such a religion to exist.

## CHAPTER IV.

THIRD OBJECTION—THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION MAY HAVE  
BEEN ESTABLISHED, AND THE MIRACLES BY  
WHICH IT IS SUPPORTED, PERFORMED  
BY SATAN, OR HIS AGENTS.

I now come to the third objection, to the divine origin of the scriptures, which (though the infidels have made little use of it) might be urged against the christians with great plausibility. It is the supposition that Jesus was satan, or the agent of satan, and that his disciples were inspired by the infernal powers, for the purpose of deluding man from the doctrines of truth.\*

This objection was first brought forward by the Jews, who said of our saviour, This man doth not

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\* The christians, in the earlier ages of their religion, asserted that the Gods of the heathen were devils, or ministers of the devil. The heathens might have retorted this charge, if they had had any being in their mythology, of a character similar to that of satan; but unfortunately for their religion, this was not the case. They had no demon, whom they might suppose Christ to be. They could not pretend that he was Pluto, for Pluto being no more than death personified, could not be supposed to have taken upon him, the character of Jesus. His office was to receive the dead, whom other powers had sent to his regions. He had no part or delight in their punishment, he never went abroad in search of victims. Of course he was not a personage, who becoming incarnate, might, under pretence of being sent from heaven, to establish a new religion, delude men from the worship of the true Gods.

cast out devils, but by Belzebub the prince of devils. Jesus said, in answer to this, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to destruction, and every house, or city, divided against itself, shall not stand. And if satan cast out satan, he is divided against himself, how then shall his kingdom stand.

It must be acknowledged that this answer is insufficient. The man who enters the enemy's camp, pretending to be a friend, but with the intention of betraying him, might, the better to effect his object, strike a few blows against his own countrymen. When Zopyrus pretended to join the Babylonians, that he might betray their city to his master, Darius, he first warned that monarch, that the better to deceive the enemy, he should at times war with effect against the Persians, his friends. And if satan, that artful serpent, should find it necessary, in order to deceive mankind, that he should cast out a few devils, can we believe that he would hesitate. The Jews accuse Jesus, who says he is the son of God, of being Belzebub, or the agent of Belzebub. They assert, that he pretends to be the son of God, that he may gain a great number of worshippers, whose souls he will have power to torment, in their future life, that he intends to make his worship the prevalent religion, throughout a great part of the earth, for many, if not for all succeeding ages; and that thus he hopes to obtain the souls of the millions whom he shall delude. Jesus replies that this cannot be the case, that he cannot be Belzebub, nor hold his power of Belzebub, because he had cast out a few devils, and delivered a few wretches of Judea from their influence; that he would not have done this, had he been of the kingdom of satan, lest that kingdom should fall, though satan gained millions of victims by the act. This answer no one can consider satisfactory. It was better calculated to confirm, than to refute the opinion of the Jews, and it may be one reason why they repented not. Like most of the rea-

soning of our saviour, it possesses a weakness which can be accounted for only in one way, and in that way I shall account for it, in my answer to this objection.

Among the writings of some christians, I have met with arguments against this supposition, which, though different from that of Christ, bear some resemblance to it, and may be answered with equal ease, because they are equally weak.

These arguments are drawn from the moral precepts which Christ gave, and the good deeds which he did. It is said that satan, who is the enemy of man, would not have healed the sick, raised the dead, and employed his time in deeds of charity; that he would not have given us those precepts of morality, which contribute so much to our happiness. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies, he could not therefore have given those exhortations to virtue and piety, which are so contrary to his nature, and those denunciations against vice, in which he so much delights. His endeavors would have been to create a contempt of virtue, and a hatred of God.

To this the infidel may answer, if it was the intention of satan to deceive mankind, by passing for the son of God, it would be necessary that his conduct should accord with the character of the being whom he alledged himself to be. He would not recommend impiety, and contempt of God. Such conduct would at once show his infernal nature. His policy would be, to represent that he was a God, or the son of God, and that men of course ought to believe and worship him. By this he would make them the worshippers of satan, while they believed that they were adoring the true God; and would induce them to travel towards the regions of darkness, while they hoped that they were in the road to heaven. Nor let it be said, that if they believed they were adoring God, they were excusable, though they paid their homage to the devil

in fact ; and that he could not, in consequence of this mistake in their worship, be entitled to their souls.— Every one knows that the heathens are to be damned, though they believe that they are worshipping the true Gods. The *quo animo* has nothing to do here. Every man who worships wrong must be damned, whether he do it ignorantly or willingly. Satan might, therefore, hope to gain the souls of those who desired to worship God, by misdirecting their worship, not by recommending impiety. The christians formerly asserted that the Gods of the ancients were devils, yet neither these devils, if they were such, nor their priests, recommended impiety and blasphemy. They told men to be pious, but they misdirected the piety which they recommended. They said worship, and be grateful to the Gods ; but they added falsely, we are the Gods whom you should adore. They recommended virtue, but it was only to deceive.

The policy of Jesus, if he belonged to the infernal powers, was the same, and with that policy his conduct well agreed. He declared that he was the son of God, that those who did not believe on him, should be damned, while he perhaps knew, that to believe in him was damnation. He advised men to go to heaven, but in directing the way, he showed them the road to his own regions. If Jesus was satan, all the christians must be damned, and he has gained their souls, by his deception ; success certainly justifies his policy, though all the arguments that the christians have advanced against the supposition, that he was the grand enemy of man, amounts to this, that if he was such, his conduct was impolitic.

We are told, that as satan is the enemy of man, he would not have conferred favors upon him ; he would not have healed the sick, raised the dead, and have given excellent moral precepts. But satan, the better to deceive man, and lead him to destruction, might con-

fer upon him a few slight benefits, while he clandestinely did him much greater injuries. He would not tempt man with open and apparent evil. As soon might we expect that the fisher would use bait odious to the fish. His policy would be to perform acts, and lead men in courses, which appear at a superficial view beneficial, but which on a closer examination, or in their accidental effects, are found highly injurious. Such an act was the establishment of the christian religion. The founders of this religion, as it is said, (and I will not now enquire how truly,) were persons of unexceptionable morality. In the sacred writings, are many moral precepts, which inculcate a regard for virtue, and a hatred of vice, and which represent morality as essential to happiness after death. We might therefore suppose, at first view, that the belief of these would be beneficial to morals, and consequently to the happiness of man. But a more profound examination, will convince us that christianity injures morals, by placing them upon a false foundation, and that while it holds out motives to men, for being virtuous, it causes them to mistake vice for virtue, and virtue for vice.

But when we look at the effects of christianity, we find that nothing can agree better with the character of satan, than the establishment of a religion, which could produce so many and so great evils. That religion, which is said to be so holy, mild, and virtuous, that it could be established by none but God, has actually produced the most bloody wars, and the most odious tyranny, that the world has ever witnessed: it has drank the blood of millions, and held Europe in slavery for more than a thousand years. Its votaries, holding the creed that those who believed not must be damned, have believed that the extermination of infidelity, how much blood soever it might cost, would be a deed of the greatest virtue, and that those who should perform it, would be worthy of the highest place in heaven. In consequence of this belief, they have

waged the bloodiest wars, and the most oppressive persecutions, persuaded that their conduct was agreeable to the will of God, and the true interests of man. But the infidel has not suffered alone. All those deemed heretics by the stronger party, have felt the effect of their pious wrath. Their bodies have been frequently burnt for the good of their souls, that they might taste the horrors of hell, before they rushed blindly into them. The spirit of persecution began and progressed with the power of christians ; it ended only when their religion was divided into so many sects that no one could contend with the rest ; it has begun, progressed, and fallen, with the power of every sect, and it will begin again, whenever christians shall be united, for it arises from the spirit of their religion,

But the blood that has been shed, and the slavery that has been endured, are not the only evils which have sprung from christianity. Morals have been perverted by it. Christians have held, that falsehood was commendable when it agreed with the interest of religion, of that religion too, which has been attended with all the evils I have mentioned, which has produced a gloomy and misanthropic philosophy, which has made men the enemies of their species, hoping to merit heaven by making earth a hell.

Would it not agree well with the character of satan, to establish a religion which produces effects like these. You may say that it was the abuse of christianity, from which these evils arose, but this does not avail. The state of the argument is unaltered. Satan (with little more than human foresight) might foresee this abuse.

No one can doubt that to produce these evils, whether they arose necessarily, or accidentally, from christianity, satan would do the good deeds that were done, and say the good things that were said by Christ. If the saints, when it serves their turn, can maintain abominable and destructive doctrines, shall not satan,

when it serves his, inculcate those which are good.— The evil arising in this case, from the religion, which he (as is probable) has established, by inculcating those principles, are surely enough to compensate him for more disagreeable labors, without taking into account the deep damnation to be inflicted on the worshippers he has thus gained.

These, reader, are the words which an infidel might use, and I regret that we have taken no greater care to guard against them. It is indeed a strange perversion of reason, to make the evils which have arisen, and will still arise, from christianity, a proof that that holy religion is the work of satan. The christian knows that these evils are necessary to disgust us with earth, and to turn our minds to God. Yet the unbeliever will hold his opinion, unless we can oppose him with incontrovertible arguments. It becomes us therefore to look to our defence. If I have endeavored to destroy the arguments which christians have used, it is because I thought them weak, and hoped to furnish others, on which we might with greater safety depend. I believed, that the weapons on which christians relied, were unfit for war; I have therefore snatched those weapons from their hands, that I might supply them with better arms.

## CHAPTER V.

### ANSWER TO THE THIRD OBJECTION.

WITH the intention of doing this, I shall endeavor to show, from the faults and imperfections in the evidence on which christianity depends, that it was not established by satan. You may perhaps doubt the logic, by which I infer from the existence of such faults, that christianity is not the work of the devil, but if it had been established by so artful a being, if he, to make us believe it was the true religion of God, had performed a series of miracles, he would have taken care that the evidence, by which these miracles were to be proved to future ages, should be unexceptionable; since every defect in that evidence must tend to diminish his success. But says the infidel, if these miracles were performed by God, for the purpose of establishing his religion, would he not have taken as great care, that the evidence by which their performance was to be proved, should be unexceptionable? Would he, sooner than satan, have suffered any defect in this evidence?

This last question I answer in the affirmative. If christianity was given us by God, it was given us for our own benefit. God himself was not interested in its success. It harmed not him for us to worship the infernal powers, or the works of our own hands. But

as eternal misery was the consequence of our mistaking the true object of gratitude and adoration, he wished to save us, if we were willing to be saved ; he therefore gave us the scriptures, to teach us the road to salvation. As we alone were to be benefited by receiving these, it could not be expected that God would take great pains to make the evidence of their authenticity perfect : he had no motive for such a labor. He gave them to us with such evidence as pleased him, in his wisdom, to give : if we reject them, as wanting proof, it is our fault, and we alone are injured. Nor can we complain of God, that he has given us no more light ; he might with justice have left us in eternal darkness ; we must adore his name, that he has revealed to us thus much, proved as the revelation is.

But if christianity was established, and the scriptures given us by satan, his object was to ensnare our souls, and he would have used all his art and cunning, to effect his purpose. Every thing in his religion, tending to produce disbelief, had been struck from it ; no defects would have been suffered in the evidence on which it was founded, for such would produce disbelief. In short, every circumstance regarding that religion, would be placed in the situation most enticing to human reason. The man who should cast meat to fish, solely for their food, would regard but little the manner in which it was thrown ; but the fisher would dress his bait with the greatest possible adroitness, and put it in the form most enticing to the fish. If God should give us a religion solely for our benefit, he would pay small regard to the evidence of its authenticity ; but if satan should attempt to deceive and ensnare us by promulgating a false religion, which should make the believer his worshipper, he would remove every thing which would make us suspect a deception.

That there are defects in the evidence on which christianity depends, and defects too of such a nature,

as can only be accounted for by supposing that the being by whom it was established had no interest in its success, may be easily shown. The one to which I shall first direct the attention of my readers, may be discovered by examining the second chapters of Matthew and Luke.

It is said in the first of these, verse 1st. That when Jesus was born at Bethlehem, certain wise men of the east, came to Jerusalem, enquiring for him, that was born king of the Jews; for said they, we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.— Here let me remark, that these wise men must have possessed more astrology than we now deem consistent with wisdom.\* How should they know that the star related to the king of the Jews rather than to the king of Britain. But we let this pass. In verse sixteenth it is said—

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children, that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coast thereof, from two years old and under.”

Let us enquire into the probability of this. Herod might indeed be a tyrant, but what motive could he have for such cruelty. Could it be jealousy of this new king. The friend of Antony, would hardly have believed the prophecy, upon which his fear must be founded. But if such an act of unheard of cruelty had been committed, should we not have heard of it

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\* The christians attempt to destroy this objection, by asserting that there was a tradition in the east, concerning a king, that was to be born of the Jews. It is not consistent with my present purpose to examine this tradition, if it was, I could draw some more powerful objections from it. It is said, that if this story of the wise men, and the murder of the innocents, was not true, it never could have passed with the Jews. But we have good reason to believe that it did not pass, since it is rejected by the later evangelists. The same may be said of the story of the guard, set by the Jews, at the sepulchre of Christ.

from some other source. But we do not. Josephus, who would certainly have related the story if true, is silent. It rests upon the authority of Matthew alone.

But it is further related in this chapter, that Joseph, being warned by a dream, departed into Egypt, where he remained till the death of Herod, that he then, by the command of the angel, returned into Judea ; but that, hearing that Archelaus reigned in his father Herod's stead, he was afraid, and turned aside into Galilee. It appears from this, that he was not a native of Nazareth, but that he dwelt there, to shun the tyranny of Archelaus. Let us compare this account with that of Luke. The latter asserts that Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem to be taxed, that while they were there Jesus was born, and that after having tarried eight days, and circumcised the child, they returned into Nazareth their native city. Nothing is here said of the wise men, of the murder of the innocents, or of the journey into Egypt. The reader may reconcile these accounts in the manner he best can ; all I ask of him is, that he will give them an attentive perusal, and say, if they form not a defect in the evidence, on which christianity depends, which satan would not have permitted, if that religion had been from him.

Matthew, xxvii. 62. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together unto Pilate :

63. Saying, sir, we remember, that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.

64. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure, until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead, so that the last evil be worse than the first.

65. Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch : go your

ways, make it as sure as you can.

66. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

xxviii. 11. Now when they were going, behold some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers :

13. Saying, say ye his disciples came by night and stole him away, while we slept.

14. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught : and this saying is common among the Jews, to this day.

Nothing can show more forcibly the deplorable condition of those who have been left by God to their own foolishness, than this honest though singular narration. The chief priests and pharisees had no reason to suspect the disciples of an intention to steal away the body of Christ, for the disciples did not know that he said while yet alive, After three days I will rise again.— No such prophecy had ever been made in the hearing of the disciples, nor any that ever reached them.— This is manifest from all the evangelists, who represent the disciples as surprised, even to disbelief, when they heard that Jesus had risen from the dead : and as having had no previous expectation of the event. This they certainly would have had, if they had heard Jesus say, that he should rise again, or even if they had heard it asserted by others, that he had delivered such a prophecy. No one, who was his disciple, would, in such a case, have required to have seen him, before he could believe that he was risen.

I know it is said in Matthew, xx. 19. That Jesus foretold that he should be delivered to the Gentiles, to be mocked, scourged, and crucified, and that on the third day he should rise again. Yet as no such event as the resurrection was expected by the disciples, at the time of Christ's death, it is presumed that this prophecy (or at least the latter part of it) was given in parable, or in some way that it could not be understood, until it was fulfilled.

It is mentioned in John, ii. 19. that Jesus said to the Jews, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again. That he then spake of the temple of his body. That when he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and that they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. But certainly no such force had been put on this obscure parable, if Christ had given any unequivocal prophecy, to the same effect. As the time when this parable was given, according to John, differs little from that in which, according to Matthew, Jesus said that he would rise from the dead, it was probably the prophecy to which the latter evangelist alluded.

John. xx. 9. It is said of the disciples, For as yet they knew not the scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead. But what need had they to learn this from the scriptures, if Christ himself had foretold it.

If the disciples knew of no prophecy of Christ, that he should rise from the dead, we cannot suppose that any was given. He appears to have been attended continually by a large number of his disciples, and if such a prophecy had been spoken, they must have known it. But suppose it given as is related by Matthew, in unequivocal terms, it could not have been known to the Jews, for Christ took the twelve apart to relate it. It was therefore a groundless suspicion in the chief priests and pharisees, not only to believe

that the disciples would steal the body of Christ, but to suspect that the latter had said, that he would rise again on the third day.\* It was a suspicion too which God must have excited in their hearts (since there was nothing on earth to excite it) that the truth might prevail over their opposition.

It is also asserted that the priests and pharisees gave the soldiers large money to say that the disciples stole away the body of Christ, while they slept. It could not have escaped the penetration of the people (unless they too were governed, through the curse of God, by the blindest delusion) that these soldiers could not know what passed while they slept. Neither is it a very probable tale, that a body of soldiers (whose lives depend on their vigilance) should all, in direct opposition of their duty, sleep at the same time; nor would an enlightened people believe all right, when they heard these soldiers honestly confessing an improbability, so little favorable to their honor, and (without some unlawful connivance at their guilt, in their rulers) so dangerous to their safety. It is evident therefore that both the priests and pharisees, who bribed the soldiers to an assertion so improbable, that there could be no hope of its producing the desired effect, and the people who believed that assertion, were deeply blinded by the curse of God.

This tale, when believed, is very useful to our religion. It shows the foolishness of man when he contends against God. Yet I believe Matthew was unwise in relating it, since the absurdity of the conduct of the rulers and people of Israel, is so great as to produce

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\* There are some passages which indicate very strongly, that Christ did foretell his resurrection from the dead. I must therefore, remind my reader, that as I have proved from the scriptures, that he delivered no such prophecy, it would not oppose my purpose, for another to prove the contrary, from the same scriptures.

disbelief: The reader will readily perceive my object in making this remark. Had the historian (if we may give him that profane name) been an agent of satan, his conduct had been more artful.

It is related by all the evangelists, that Christ frequently cast out devils, from persons possessed of them. The conduct of the persons thus possessed, resembled that of our insane in so high a degree, as to excite a suspicion that the maladies are the same. If it was said only, that Jesus cast out devils, we might admit, that those persons supposed by the superstition of the Jews, to be possessed of devils, were barely insane, and that Christ and his disciples, not wishing uselessly to contend with this superstition, had accommodated their language to it, and said that they had cast out a devil, when they had cured insanity. But as it is said that seven were cast out of one woman, a legion out of one man, that they besought Christ that he would give them permission to enter into the swine, that Christ having granted them permission, the swine ran violently into the sea and perished, that when cast out they frequently spake, acknowledging that Jesus was the son of God, we must give up our former conjecture and conclude that these devils were beings possessing forms, for if they had not distinct forms, they could not be numbered, neither could they be said to speak, for no one could know that the voice proceeded from them. The reader must therefore adopt one of the three following opinions :

First, That though the conduct of those possessing devils in Judea, was similar to that of the insane of modern times, the causes of their irregularity were totally different.

Second, That the insane of the present, as well as of all other times, are actually possessed of devils.

Third, That those thought by the superstition of the Jews, and said in the scriptures to be possessed of

devils, were not thus possessed, but solely insane, and of course that the scriptures are not true.

If we believe the first of these, we must believe that the laws of nature are so changed, since the days of Christ, that causes are different, though the effects remain the same. The second is doubtless the correct supposition, but as it is not commonly received, many will be induced to adopt the third. I therefore think it would have been better, if the sacred scriptures had not mentioned these miracles.

Matthew, xiii. 58. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

Was this the physician who came not to heal the whole, but the sick; was this the prophet who was sent, not to call the righteous, but the wicked to repentance. We should suppose that such a personage would perform his mightiest miracles in the countries of unbelievers, that he might convert them. The conduct of Christ in this instance, however, agrees with that of all beings, possessing supernatural power or knowledge. Prophets seldom open their mouths, where their prophecies are doubted, but among people that believe, hundreds have been assembled on one occasion. Miracles are performed only where the people are ready to receive them; ghosts appear only to the superstitious; and witches prefer those nations where they are punished with death, to those where their existence is doubted.

I have before observed that the reasoning of Christ is never very accurate. I could bring many instances, but the reader may search for himself. I have only to add, that this inaccuracy can only be accounted for, by supposing that Christ himself had no interest in the success of his religion.

The last defect in the testimony concerning Christ, which I shall mention, is the obscurity in the proph-

cies relating to him, their apparent application, and revelation, in many instances, to other events, and the want of evidence of the performance of many of the events prophesied, which leaves room for the infidel to suspect that the evangelist related them for the sake of the prophecies.

Matthew, i. 22. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet, saying,

23. Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel ; which, being interpreted, is, God with us.

We find in the seventh chapter of Isaiah, that Tyrea and Israel were leagued against Ahaz, king of Judea. The Lord informs Ahaz by the mouth of Isaiah his prophet, that they shall not succeed. For (says he v. 8.) the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people.

9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

10. Moreover the Lord spake unto Ahaz, saying,

11. Ask thee a sign of the Lord, etc.

14. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

15. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

16. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest, (Syria and Israel,) shall be forsaken of both her kings.

This passage has the appearance of promising a sign to Ahaz, that his enemies should be destroyed, as the Lord had foretold. Of course the sign ought to have

been given, before the event, of which it was a sign, took place. As it was promised to Ahaz, it ought to have been given during his life. It seems that the conquest of Syria and Israel, should have taken place between the birth of the child, and his learning to refuse the evil (butter and honey) and choose the good. But waving this objection, this prophecy cannot profit the Christian, because the event prophecied, the birth of a son from a virgin, is one incapable of proof.

Matthew, ii. 4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them, where Christ should be born.

5. And they said unto him in Bethlehem in Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet.

6. And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judea, art not the least among the princes of Judea, for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

I have already shown that Matthew and Luke do not agree concerning Christ's birth at Bethlehem.—As both his parents were Nazarines, and as Christ was brought up at that place, the infidel may suspect, without much danger of refutation, that his birth really took place there, but was transferred to Bethlehem, for the sake of this prophecy.\* It may likewise be observed, that Christ cannot well be called a ruler of Israel, for temporal authority he certainly never had, and his spiritual authority the Jews never acknowledged. If it be said that he was of right their spiritual ruler. I answer that every man born in Bethlehem, might make the same pretence, and claim the benefit of the prediction of the prophet. But let us turn to the prophecy itself.

In Micah, v. 2. we read.

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\* Joseph is said to have come with his wife Mary, then big with child, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, (passing by Jerusalem) to be taxed. The distance by the nearest route was over three days travel. There is something singular in this.

But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.

3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she that travaileth hath brought forth, then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

4. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

5. And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men:

6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod, in the entrance thereof, thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrians, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

This prince was to be a descendant of David, and was therefore said to come out of Bethlehem. The scribes and priests erred in supposing that he must necessarily be born at that place:

Matthew, ii. 14. When he arose he took the young child, and his mother, by night and departed into Egypt.

15. And was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, saying, out of Egypt have I called my son. Hosea, xi. 1. When Israel was a child then I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt.

After relating the murder of the innocents, Matthew says, ii. 17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of Jeremy the prophet saying:

18. In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not.

Jeremiah, xxxi. after promising the restoration of Israel, the lord says, v. 15. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

16. Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

17. And there is hope in thine end saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border. A voice of weeping is here said to be heard in Rama, for the captives that had been carried from that place into Assyria. Rachel was said to weep, because she was the mother of the tribe of Benjamin, in which Rama was situated. Bethlehem and Rama were in opposite directions from Jerusalem; the persecution of Herod, therefore, could not extend to, or cause any weeping in Rama, nor could Rachel be said to mourn, for her children slain in Bethlehem, for that was a city of Judea.

After relating Joseph's return from Egypt, Matthew says, ii. 23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: He shall be called a Nazarene.

Judges, xiii. 5. Speaking of Sampson, it is said, He shall be called a Nazarite unto God from the womb.

This is the only passage I can find, bearing the most distant relation to the one mentioned by Matthew: how close a resemblance this bears to it, the reader may judge.

Matthew. iv. 12. Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee:

13. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthali.

14. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying

15. The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthali by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

16. The people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and unto them which sat in the regions and shadow of death, light is sprung up.

Isaiah viii. 22. And they shall look unto the earth and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish, and they shall be driven to darkness. ix. 1. Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon and the land of Napthali, and afterwards died, more grievously afflict her, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.

2. The people that walked in darkness saw a great light; they that dwelt in the land and shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

It is necessary to remark here, that the Assyrians had, a little before the time in which the prophet speaks, captured Napthali Galilee, a part of Zebulon and Damascus. What is meant by the second verse quoted by the evangelist, I pretend not to know.

Matthew, xiii. 14. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias which saith by hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. But Isaiah speaks, more probably, of the Jews of his own time. If they had understood his prophecies, and changed their conduct, the Lord, according to his promise, could not have led them into captivity. But his purpose requiring this, he orders their hearts to be made fat, and their ears heavy, lest



they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts and convert and be healed.

John, ix. 36. For these things were done that the scriptures might be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken.

In Exodus, Chap. xii. and Numbers, Chap. ix. Moses, speaking of the lamb to be used at the passover, orders, that a bone of him shall not be broken.

Acts, iii. 23. For Moses truly saith unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Deut. xviii. 15. The Lord thy God, says Moses, will raise unto thee a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken.

Some understand this prophecy to relate to Joshua, some to later prophets, some to a succession of prophets, and some to Christ.

There is so great an analogy between a prophet and a ruler, that the latter is sometimes intended by the former word. It is the business of the ruler to direct such acts as will produce beneficial effects; this he cannot do unless he possesses some knowledge of the future. His office is to prophesy, or foretell the evils which will arise from one course of conduct, and the benefits that will arise from another; he may therefore well be called a prophet. But if we admit that a ruler may be meant by the word prophet, in this passage, the meaning of Moses is manifest. The Lord will raise thee up a prophet; that is the Lord will raise thee up a ruler like unto me. Israel shall never be destitute of a ruler, of sufficient wisdom to rule the people.

The Lord repeats this promise in his own word, verse 18, and adds: I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him. This is said because the rulers of Israel derived their power and

laws from God, whose commands they delivered to the people.

It is not my intention to enter into a close examination of the prophecies relating to Christ. Enough of them, for my purpose, have already been noticed. The reader, however, who chooses to pursue the examination further, will find the other prophecies to be of the same character. It must be acknowledged that they do not point so directly to the mission and deeds of Christ, as to remove the doubts of the sceptical. I should regret that the slightest refuge was here left for infidelity, if these defects in the prophecies, as well as those in the other evidences of Christianity, did not enable us to prove that it is not the work of Satan.

But before I take leave of this subject, I must notice one hypothesis to which the infidel may yet cling ; with the hope of doing away the effects of the apparent want of application of the prophecies to the mission of Christ. This hypothesis is that though christianity was from satan, the prophecies were from God, and related to other events ; that these being given, before the infernal monarch laid the foundation of his religion, he could only take them such as they were. He might torture and twist their meaning, so as to make them apply to the events he wished, but he could not alter their words ; and if those words were not so suitable to his purpose as he could wish, there was no remedy. Infidels may even be so stubborn as to affirm that the nonapplication of the prophecies to the events which they were designed (as is said by the evangelist) to foretell, proves that christianity, and the prophecies were not both from God, because we might presume that if both were from the same author, they would better agree.

These arguments of the infidels, at first view, appear plausible ; but if satan had been the founder of christianity, he might doubtless have sent on earth, previous

to the establishment of that religion, prophets of his own, who might be foretelling the events to come, have prepared man for its reception, satan would not have left untried, an expedient from which so great hopes might be entertained.

I have done with the prophecies. The defects in them, as well as in the other evidence of christianity, prove that that religion must have been established by a being who had very little interest in its success. It is singular that most of these defects, have the appearance of arising from human imperfection; some of them appear to have arisen from attempts to improve the evidence of our religion, by pious frauds, which are not executed with sufficient art to ensure success. Among these may be numbered the second chapter of Matthew, and the story of the guard, which was placed by the Jews at the sepulchre of Christ.

Some philosophers have formed an opinion, from the imperfections of this world, that it was not created by the Almighty himself, but by some subaltern God, to whom the work was entrusted. We may conclude with greater safety, from the imperfections in christianity, and in the evidence on which it rests, that its establishment was entrusted not to subaltern Gods, nor to the angels, but to the weaker, if not more humble, ministers of the supreme being, the saints and primitive christians. In the choice of these ministers, God seems to have regarded the success of his religion, so far as to choose men who were very little scrupulous in the means they employed to effect their object; but he searched not much for wisdom, nor did he think it worth his labor to cleanse the gospels from the effects of their folly: so little for his own benefit was the religion which he gave us.

# **SPIRITUAL MUSTARD POT :**

## *PART THIRD.*

### **AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION.**

#### **CHAPTER I.**

##### **OF NATURAL RELIGION.**

WE can, in no manner, defend a religion more successfully, than by exposing the errors in the doctrines of its enemies ; for when men are convinced that the principles of those who oppose it are false, they will ever be inclined to receive its tenets, without even the labor of an examination. It is the nature of man, when he deserts the standard of one party, to enlist under that of its foes. This was perhaps the cause, next to the assistance of heaven, which enabled the christians to rise, in so short a time, from the obscurity of their origin, to the command of the world. They refuted the doctrines of their enemies, and the people received their own, without imposing upon them the trouble of proving their truth. They showed men the pernicious tendency of their superstitious customs, the absurdity of their traditions, the defects and vices in the character of their Gods, and the people abhorring their former superstitions, went over to its enemies, without enquiring the character of the religion which they adopted. Thus it happened, that the heathen religion contributed, in a two fold manner, to the success of christianity : first, as I have

shown in the second part of this work, by preparing men to receive the miracles performed by Christ, as evidence of a communication from God : and secondly, as I have shown above, by causing those who abandoned its tenets, to receive those of the christians, its enemies, without examination. These benefits, as I have before observed of one of them, should convince us of the wisdom of God, in suffering the existence of that religion.

It may, however, appear to some, that a refutation of the doctrines of the ancient heathen, would in the present time be useless to the cause of christianity, because there are none that believe these doctrines, who may be converted from them. But the heathen religion has been extinguished in Europe, only by the force of the law ; it may therefore revive in the United States, where every man has a right to adopt whatever opinion he pleases. The preference of christianity to this religion, and the falsehood of the tenets of the latter, are by no means so manifest at a slight view as some imagine. The heathens held that sacrifices should be offered to the Gods, who desired them, as was doubtless supposed by some, for food. This, the christian will say with justice, was an absurd opinion, but I should consider the doctrine that the deity desires our love and worship, (the desire of which exists in men, only because they need assistance, and are dependant on one another for a great share of their happiness,) as little less absurd, was it not supported by a revelation from God. If they had other doctrines, that were hostile to reason, we have still more that are nonsense to all but the converted ; and which those whose hearts have not been changed by God, can never receive. We ought not, therefore, to be surprised if some men should rashly prefer heathenism to christianity, since human reason is ever liable to be led astray. For fear of this, I shall attempt a short account of the origin of those religions, which

existed on the borders of the Mediterranean, before the time of Christ; in which I shall labor, chiefly, to show that they did not spring from God, and that their doctrines were false, consulting, as usual, the interests of our sacred religion alone.

In regard to the origin and government of the universe, and the existence of a supreme, or superior being, there appears to be three philosophical opinions, natural to mankind, which would divide their belief, if they were not communicated from one man to another. One of these would be adopted by every man who reflected on the subject to which they relate, if all were left to form their own conclusions, without the assistance or influence of others.

These opinions I shall denominate Theism, Pantheism,\* and Atheism. The first of these, is a belief in the existence of a God, who created the world; the second a belief in the existence of a God who is the soul of the universe, and governs it as the soul does the body; the third, and last, is a belief in the existence of no God. The Theists derive their opinions from, and support them by, arguments drawn from propositions, which they conceive to be first principles, but which are in fact, no more than conclusions drawn from experience, extended beyond the bounds which true logic has prescribed. Of these principles, and the arguments drawn from them, I have before spoken.

The Pantheists derive their doctrine from the resemblance which they perceived between the law of nature, and the mind of man. All we can behold of

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\* Pantheism and Theism, however, differ more in words than in substance, nor is the distinction between either of them (when not attended by revealed, or traditional religion,) and Atheism, of so great importance, as some imagine; especially, if no false conclusions be derived from them. The inferences which were drawn from these doctrines, might, nevertheless, differ greatly, because they were perfectly arbitrary and illogical.

the minds of other men, is the motions and changes of their bodies, which are produced by the mind, which, as we perceive are not governed by the laws of ordinary matter, but which have, nevertheless, a degree of regularity, a connexion with one another, and with the motions and changes of other bodies. The mind, as we conceive, produces and controuls these events, and it is only in them that it can be perceived by us. The mind of a man, therefore, so far as it is perceptible to any but himself, may be regarded as a system of laws, by which the body is in part governed. Viewed in this light, it strongly resembles nature, or the laws of nature, by which the motions of the universe are controuled. This resemblance, the Pantheists perceive, and conclude from it, that the universe is governed by thought and will, like the bodies of men.

Thus far their conclusion must be harmless, being destitute of meaning, because it affirms nothing, which can be decided by our faculties. If it be asserted that the motions of the earth, which we attribute to gravitation, and other causes, are produced by will, nothing is affirmed to which any meaning can be attached, because the will of another being can never be perceptible to us. Every thing in fact is the same, whether that will does or does not exist. The doctrine, therefore, of those who maintain its existence, can neither be considered as true nor false since they assert the existence of nothing, which can exist to us.

But when philosophers had once adopted the opinion, that the earth was governed by a mind, some of them attributed to that mind properties and characters which never belonged to the law of nature. They concluded that it was moved by prayers and honors like the mind of man, though experience should have taught them, that nature, or the governing principles of the universe, whether it was or was not mind, continued inexorably the same, let the conduct of man be what it would.

The Atheist believes, that the origin of the universe can never be known to us, because it could never be produced by the operation of any law of nature, with which we are acquainted. We know no law by which any thing, whether matter or mind, might cause matter to begin to exist. If God, therefore, created the earth from nothing, his power must arise from some law, of which we are totally ignorant, for so far as our observation extends, mind has not power to call matter into existence. If it was proved by arguments, not drawn from the existence of the universe, that God existed, and had power to create worlds, the Atheists agree, that we might justly attribute the creation of the earth to him; but they maintain, that when we create a God, and give him his power of creation, only to account for the existence of the universe, we adopt conclusions which are illogical, and founded on hypothesis alone.

They do not think it strange, that man should be ignorant of the origin of the earth, and of the human race, because it was impossible for any one to be present at the beginning of their existence, to observe the manner in which they sprang into being. They consider the man, who attempts to discover the manner in which the earth was created, or the cause of its existence, as much in the same condition, in which one would be placed, who, brought up without any communication with, or knowledge of, the rest of mankind should attempt to discover his own origin. They believe that, in order to learn the origin of any thing, that existed before ourselves, we must behold similar things subsequently beginning to exist, and observe the causes by which they are produced.

In the beginning, the difference between these opinions was not important. The Theist, and the Pantheist, might both believe that their God might be moved by prayers and honors, while the Atheist would contend that these were useless; but this would be the

only difference, in the conclusions which they drew from their theories, and there is a doubt whether even this existed, before their philosophy was adulterated by tradition and allegories. Be that as it may, the future existence of the soul, was not a point in dispute between them; for from neither of these systems, should we grant it to be true, could it be demonstrated that the soul would, or would not, exist after its separation from the body; or that it would, or would not, be punished in a future world, for the crimes which it had committed in this. These doctrines have naturally no connexion with the question of the existence of God; and have been joined with it only by tradition and false philosophy. Should we grant that there is no God, it may still be true, that the soul of man will exist after his death, and that it will be punished for his vices, or rewarded for his virtues; the laws of nature may be such, as to lead the virtuous to happiness, and the vicious to misery, in their future state. We know nothing of the laws which relate to our condition after death, and if we indulge in conjectures concerning them, we may make them what we please. But if it should be admitted, that God does exist, we should still be unable to prove, from reason alone, that the soul does not die with the body; and much less, that it will be punished, or rewarded, in a future world. As is now acknowledged, by every philosopher, we can have no evidence, except from revelation, that this world is not our all.

As the doctrine of the future existence of the soul cannot be proved, by arguments drawn from nature, it must have originated from tradition, or revelation; but as we find it first existed among a people to whom we know God never revealed it, tradition must have been its true source, though God has, at a later period, confirmed it, by the revelation of his son. How tradition might give rise to this doctrine, I shall hereafter attempt to show, but I must first notice a theolo-

gical system, which seems to be a compound of Pantheism, Theism, and an opinion, which originated partly from tradition, and partly from philosophy.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF TRITHEISM.

TRITHEISM, or the doctrine of the trinity, the belief of the existence of three Gods, or of three persons, forming (in some manner incomprehensible to us) one God, is a doctrine which was adopted by the Grecian philosophers, Plato and Pythagorus, from whom it has been transmitted to the christians. The Persians and the Indians have likewise each a trinity, in their religion, but they differ essentially from the one of which I am speaking, and probably arose from different origins.\*

The three Gods, whose existence Plato appears to have adopted in his philosophy, were, † The God of the Theists, or the creator of the universe; the God of the Pantheist, or the soul of the universe, and the God Reason.‡ This doctrine is so deeply mixed with

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\* The Persians, from whom the world has derived the doctrine of the two powers, considered the Northern constellations as the powers of Good, and the Southern as the powers of Evil. The former they supposed to be governed by the God of Good, and the latter by the God of Evil. Hence the Sun, the third God in their trinity, Mithra, became a mediator between these powers, because it passed every six months from one to the other, as does Mithra, according to their traditions.

The trinity of the Indians is composed of the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer. No being, analagous to the last, is found in the trinity of the christians.

† The first the Father, the second the Holy Ghost, the third the Son of the Christians.

‡ In Greek logos or nous. The ο logos, in the first chapter of John, should be translated, reason, instead of the word.

tradition, and has suffered so many changes from them, that in the trinity of the christians, it bears little resemblance to what it originally was, yet we may trace with accuracy, in its present form, the causes to which it owes its existence, and some of the changes which it has undergone.

The two Gods of the Theists and the Pantheists, may be considered as rulers of the universe, and therefore may easily be confounded with the law of nature. One of these is, in fact, no more than that law changed into a mind ; while the other controuls it, and sustains its existence. It is not strange, therefore, that things which ought, in truth, to be attributed to the law of nature, should be attributed to either of these Gods.

Men, at the beginning of their existence, are ignorant of the laws of nature, or the principles by which the earth is governed. This ignorance would be destructive to those who possessed it, should it continue complete, for any considerable time, if they were not guided by men of greater knowledge. That man would soon come to an unfortunate end, who should not know that he could not without injury, hold his hand in the fire, walk upon the water, or leap from a precipice. A nation which did not possess a large portion of land, in proportion to the number of its inhabitants, would soon be ruined, if the principles of agriculture were unknown to its people. Nor would a knowledge of these laws and principles preserve us, if no regard was paid them in our conduct. It may therefore be asserted with truth, that ignorance, or disobedience of the law of nature, leads to destruction.

But as the laws of nature are the same as the laws of God, in the systems of the Theists and Pantheists, and as these philosophers would attribute, as I have before observed, whatever might of truth be asserted of the laws of nature, to their Gods, or to the laws of those

Gods, this destruction would be said to arise from the ignorance of God, of his character or of his law, or from the neglect of that law. Thus, if a man should suffer any important evil, from his ignorance, or imprudence, it was said that he was punished for his ignorance of God, or for disobedience to his commands. As the evil, which he suffered, was produced by the operation of the laws which he had violated, it would be added, that God had inflicted the punishment upon him for his ignorance of the divine nature. Those men, who by their knowledge, by the discovery of new laws, or by the invention of arts, should confer benefits on mankind, would for the same reason be called the favorites of the Deity. They would be denominated the prophets of future events, because they would in some cases, be able to foretell these, through their knowledge of nature, and the promulgators or revealers of the laws and commands of God, because they made known to man, those laws of matter and mind, by which the earth and its inhabitants are governed, and which were all that was intended, by the laws and commands of the Deity, in those times.

But what, or who is it, that delivers us from the ignorance of the laws of nature, or of the commands of God? Reason, which enables us to learn the principles of nature, by which the world is governed, the order of the succession of events, and in what manner their existence may be caused or prevented. Reason, which is one of the Gods of the trinity, which may be styled the son of God, because created by him in the mind of man, at the beginning of the world, and yet be said to have existed as long as God himself, because it ever must have formed a part and attribute of his mind; which may be considered as one person with God, because it is of necessity a part of his mind and nature, and yet to be a being separate from him, because it exists in the mind of man. Reason, which may be said to partake of two natures, human

and divine, because it exists both in man and in God. This is the true saviour of mankind, because it delivers them from destruction, which, were they destitute of reason, their ignorance must produce. It is the revealer of the will of God, because it teaches men the law of nature, by which God governs the universe.

Here we may discover the origin of many of the tenets of our sacred religion. The original sin, which is born with man, which is so destructive to his happiness, which God punishes so severely, though it is involuntary in his creatures, is no more than ignorance. Christ, who delivers us from this sin, and reveals to us the will of God, by taking upon himself the nature of man, is no other than reason, which by entering into the mind of man, as it eternally existed in that of God, saves us from our ignorance, and its effects, the punishment which God, or nature, inflicts on those who know him not; which teaches us the principles by which the universe is governed, the true laws of God, and the conduct which will lead to happiness.—Those who despise our religion, as hostile to reason and common sense, will withdraw their objections when they learn that reason, though much adulterated by tradition, and false speculation, is in fact, one of the sacred trinity which we adore.

### CHAPTER III.

#### OF POLYTHEISM, OR TRADITIONAL RELIGION, AND FIRST OF THE POLYTHEISM OF THE GREEKS.

THERE were two kinds of Polytheism which prevailed on the borders of the Mediterranean, differing considerably in their character and origin. I shall denominate them Polytheism of the Greeks, and Polytheism of the Egyptians, though both appear to have originated in the same country, Egypt, but in later times, the former prevailed most in Greece, and the latter among the Egyptians.

*Of the Polytheism of the Greeks.*—The Greek word *theoi*, which is translated Gods, being derived from a word which signified to order, place, establish, or regulate, was originally used to denote the regulators of the affairs of the human race, or those things on which the state and condition of mankind depended. Among these were included, 1st. The laws of nature. 2d. Objects which produce very important effects, whether they exist on earth, or in heaven, as the sun, the moon, the earth and the ocean. 3d. Heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, who have possessed a great influence over mankind. 4th. Important arts and institutions. 5th. The most important virtues and vices. These were afterwards changed, in the opinion of the people, into Gods or intelligent beings. The causes which contributed to this change, were, 1st. The figurative language, used always by man, but more fre-

quently in early ages, by which inanimate things were personified, and qualities attributed to them, which belong to mind alone. 2d. The festivals that were held, and the temples that were created to their honor. 3d. The fictions and allegories of the poets. 4th. The relation of parent and child, brother and sister, husband and wife, in which they were said to stand towards one another. 5th. Traditions concerning their power, the punishment which they had inflicted on those who had offended them, and the benefits which they had conferred on their favorites. 6th. The honor which it was to a man, to be numbered among them. 7th. State policy and priestcraft.

I. Mankind in all ages, have made free use of figures of speech, in expressing their ideas; but the use of them was much the most frequent in the early ages of society, when words were few, and great liberty in the use of them was necessary, personification was a favorite figure. By this inanimate things, and particularly the inanimate theoi, were converted into beings governed by mind and reason, qualities being attributed to them, which exist in mind alone. They were represented as acting, contriving, and willing, and as their acts were of the most important kind, men began to regard them as beings of a superior order, actually possessing mind and thoughts, and a power far above their own. Instances of personification, which tend to produce this effect, are frequent in all authors. It is unnecessary, that examples should be mentioned, but I will give one from a celebrated modern poet :

*" Oh love, how perfect is thy mystic art,  
" Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,"*

Says Lord Byron. Art, we know, is an attribute of mind alone, and such a figure has a tendency to make love regarded as an intellectual being.

But nothing would be more frequently personified

than nature; the greatest, or rather the sum total of all the theoi, united; all others being but branches of nature, or of the love of nature, or objects which are dependant on it for their existence and influence. Of this, in fact, we can scarcely speak, except in such language as would excite a belief that we regarded it as intelligent. We call nature the governor of the universe, because on her depends its condition. We represent her as powerful, because man cannot resist her operations, but must submit to them, or endeavor to turn them to his advantage. We say that she directs the conduct of man, because as the constitution of his mind is dependant on, or rather forms a branch of nature, she does in fact govern his will. The order and regularity which we observe in her operations, the adaptation by her hand of every object to the purpose for which it is formed, we indicate by calling her wise, and by asserting that her contrivances are ingenious. We assert that she punishes the guilty for their crimes, because it is she that arms and unites men against those who have injured them, because when a man has dared to take the life of a fellow being, she not only commands others, through a regard for their own safety, to spill his blood, but she torments him eternally, by the fear of his fate. These figurative expressions, without which it would be impossible to speak of nature, and her operations, would all contribute to make her regarded as intelligent. Whenever philosophers spoke of her in these terms, they would be understood to mean, not the order in which events succeed each other, but a superior being, who produces that order, and controuled the world, agreeably to the philosophy of the Pantheists.

II. The good of society, and the inclination of mankind, requires that they should often meet together, that their acquaintance and connection with one another may be extended, should no such meetings exist, among the people of the lower orders, they would

have little knowledge of one another, and for the want of acquaintance their manners would become corrupt. Virtue, which is supported chiefly by the fear of disgrace, would rapidly decline, for who would fear disgrace, if they had the friendship of none, or few, to lose. The legislator, therefore, who would consult the good of the people, would encourage meetings among them, and in this he would find himself seconded by the inclinations of mankind, because every one delights in society, from which the greater part of our happiness is derived. Among christians every seventh day is devoted to religious meetings, besides other festivals. These meetings serve, in some measure, to extend acquaintance among the people, nor are they too frequent for that purpose. But in a state where no religion existed, meetings of some other kind, would be necessary which might produce the same effect, the extension of acquaintance among the people, and the gratification of their love of society. For this purpose festivals would be established, which would be held usually in honor of some man, who had benefitted his species, of some principle of nature, or of some art or institution, which was regarded as beneficial to mankind. For the benefit and utility of an art might be taught to the people, by a festival dedicated to it, nor would there be any more impropriety in dedicating a festival to a law of nature, or a beneficial inanimate theos, than to the celebration of events which have been beneficial to a nation, in commemoration of which festivals are established among us.

But the state would in a short time proceed farther, and erect temples to the honor of the theoi, in which the festivals already established might be celebrated. Every people, as soon as they have arrived to any considerable degree of civilization, have some spare labor, which they are willing should be devoted to works of architecture, for the ornament of their cities. But in order that they might unite more cheerfully in

this, it would be necessary that the edifices erected, should be of such a kind, that all might feel equally interested in their completion, and equally gratified by their magnitude and splendor. They would never, or seldom, be erected by individuals, because few persons could bear so great an expense. If they were erected by the people, they must be dedicated to some purpose, in which the people might all be interested, or if they were built by associations of individuals, they must be adapted to the common benefit of the persons by whom they were erected. But this union of interest, could be produced in no manner, better than by dedicating the edifices erected to the honor of the theoi, excepting the few which might be required for the transaction of public business, since the power of celebrating the established festivals, in a convenient manner, would be desirable to all.

It is natural for man to express his sense of the benefit which he derives from an inanimate object, by prayers addressed to it, beseeching it to continue its favors; though he knows that such a petition must be destitute of effect. Hence there would be no ceremony more appropriate to the established festivals, than prayer addressed to that object, or law of nature, or art, to the honor of which the festival was dedicated, requesting that its favor might not be withheld.

At every festival, among other ceremonies, objects would be exhibited, which were produced by, or otherwise connected with the principles of nature or art, in honor of which the festival was held. When philosophers had discovered remote and intricate connexions between the various principles of nature, which compose the chief of the theoi, ceremonies would be adopted, which would be mysterious to the common people, and which could be comprehended only by those who were acquainted with the most abstruse branches of physics. Among these ceremonies we

may place the sacred fire, kept by the Vestals of Rome, which was an emblem of that everlasting fire, the principles of life and generation, which, as Plutarch affirms, is the most active being in nature, and which was the same with the goddess Vesta herself.— There were many other ceremonies of the same kind, but it is not necessary to mention them here.

Before men had proceeded thus far, in the establishment of festivals and ceremonies, in honor of the theoi, persons would be appointed to have the care and direction of them. These would be the persons who would pray to the theoi, to which the festival was dedicated, for the continuance of its favors; they would have the superintendence of the festivals; the care of the temples; and they would also be the depositories of the knowledge of nature. It would be intended, that by devoting a great portion of their time to the study of nature, they should benefit mankind by their discoveries. This institution would be the origin of the order of priests.

When the people saw festivals established, and temples\* erected, to the honor of the theoi, and in celebration of the benefits which they had conferred on man; when they saw men appointed to oversee these festivals, who were said to be devoted to their service; when they heard prayers addressed to them, and saw ceremonies performed in their honor, which they could not understand; and finally when they were told, that they were dependant on these same theoi† for their subsistence; their happiness and their lives; they

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\* The temples, however, did not probably produce much effect, because, as they were not erected, of any considerable magnitude, till the people were far advanced in civilization, religions would probably be first formed among them, from other causes.

† I am obliged to make more frequent use of the word theoi, than I could wish, because no word, in our language, will express the same idea.

could not fail to regard them as intelligent beings, of an order more powerful than men. They could not imagine that those things, said to be so powerful, in honor of which so much time was spent, and so great expense incurred, and to whom prayers and sacrifices were offered, were, in fact, inanimate objects, or things possessing an abstract existence, or beings of the same order with themselves.

III. I have said that the third cause of the people's regarding, in later times, those things which were denominated theoi, or regulators of the earth, as Gods, or intellectual beings, which controuled the world, was the fictions and allegories of the poets. These were numerous, and their effects important. By the former the poets represented the heroes as possessing miraculous power; by the latter, they made inanimate objects, and things possessing only an abstract existence, men, or beings similar to men, except in their power; this they represented as miraculous, with the greatest propriety; because the laws of nature, the sun and moon, and other inanimate things, which have any important effect on the state of mankind, if they be represented as beings, to whom power can be attributed, may in truth be said to possess a share of it, vastly, if not infinitely, superiour to that of man. Man can never resist their operations, and they all produce effects so important that should any one, or part of them, be annihilated, the order of the universe would be destroyed. We cannot expect, therefore, that when they were represented under the form of men, powers, no greater than human, should be given them.

As an instance of these allegories, we may mention the tale which Homer relates, concerning Juno, with the assistance of sleep, conquering Jupiter by her wiles; where the poet intended sleep, if not Juno and Jupiter, as an allegorical being. A philosopher, who had lived in the time of the poet, might perhaps have discovered many other tales to be allegories, intended

to represent the operations of nature, which to us appear fictions, intended only to amuse, and related of intelligent beings, whom the poet supposed to have a real existence.

These allegories would doubtless contribute to deceive the people, in regard to the true nature of the theoi; for they could not, unless deeply versed in philosophy, discover the hidden meaning of such tales; they would therefore believe that the poet intended them as an account of facts, which had actually taken place, in the manner they were related. That Venus, Minerva, Jupiter, and the other Gods, who are only principles, or laws of nature, were beings who governed the earth with an irresistible power, and that these beings had appeared on earth, in a material form, to perform the deeds which the poet had ascribed to them. They would believe also, that those heroes, to whom the same poets had given miraculous powers, and who, as they knew, had lived as men, were some of those immortal beings, with whom they were numbered; that they had condescended, not like other Gods, to assume the human form for an hour, or a day, but to be born of woman, to pass through the various stages of life, from infancy to manhood and death, and to spend an age with man.

I must likewise mention, that the poets were not the only persons who made use of allegories. The philosophers often used them, to express their doctrines, in a manner not to be understood by all, and to give an obscure notion of their theories to the people, from whom they wished to gain disciples, but to whom they did not choose that their principles should be openly communicated, and intelligibly explained. Had they communicated their opinions to any but the initiated, without obscurity in their language, those theories which they thought so sublime, had become the common property of all, and they had been reduced to the

level of mankind. If they had given no information concerning them, they had gained no advantage from their knowledge. For these reasons, they clothed their systems in allegories, that they might be, as Aristotle said of his philosophy, published, and yet not made public; because in this manner they might excite the curiosity, and perhaps the admiration of the people, without revealing their secrets. These allegories would have an effect similar to those of the poets.

IV. The fourth cause of the mistake of the people, in their notions of the nature of the theoi, was the relation of parent and child, husband and wife, etc. in which they were said to stand towards one another. When one principle of nature was dependant on another, for its existence, it was said to be the child of the principle that produced it. Thus Cupid was said to be the child of Venus, Jupiter, nature, was said to be the father, as well as the king, of the theoi, because they are dependant on nature, of which they are in general, branches, for their existence.

Saturn, time, was said to be the father of Jupiter, because men knew no cause for the existence of nature, but supposed that it sprung up from chance in the progress of time. Saturn was also said to destroy his children, because whatever begins to exist by chance, in the progress of time, is by time destroyed. Jupiter was said to have put a stop to his destruction, because nature, or the law of nature, gives stability to the things that exist.

Minerva, wisdom, was called the daughter of Jupiter, because wisdom owes its existence to nature. She was said to be born from his brain, because that is the seat of the mind. She was said to have sprung forth armed and adult, because wisdom is never an infant. When two or more theoi, were styled the descendants of the same father, they were of course considered as

brothers, or sisters, as their sex might be.\* But this fraternal relation was sometimes given, on account of some resemblance which they bore one another. Thus Homer calls sleep the brother of death.

When two theoi, of different sex, had any intricate connexion with each other, they were considered as husband and wife. Thus Vulcan, fire, was called the husband of Venus, lust ; Jupiter, the electric fluid, of Juno, the air.

V. The people were induced to consider the theoi as intelligent beings, by the traditions, (arising from allegories) which were related concerning their power, the punishment which they had inflicted on those who had despised it, and the benefits they had conferred on their favourites. These traditions not only taught people to believe that the theoi were powerful, intelligent beings, but likewise to fear their wrath, and to believe that if they demeaned themselves not agreeably to their wills, showed them not the most submissive respect, adored not their characters, or regarded not their commands, their disobedience and impiety would be attended with the most fearful punishment.

The object of these tales, concerning the punishment which the theoi had inflicted on those who had offended them, was to teach men the importance of acquiring a knowledge of the laws of nature, and of shaping their conduct in accordance to them ; and to relate the unhappy fate, of those who had pursued a course of conduct, contrary to this. Thus, it was related that Erisichthon was punished by Ceres, with perpetual hunger, for despising her sacrifices. This indicates the fate of those who neglect the agricultural art.

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\* The reader will recollect, that though the theoi (excepting the heroes) are of the neuter gender, in our language, they were masculine, or feminine, in those of the ancients. The sex of the theoi, was determined by the language.

VI. The honor which it was to man, to be numbered among the theoi, tended to make the people believe that they were intelligent beings, of a superiour order. This honor was no less than that of being regarded as a benefactor of mankind or a regulator of their affairs. The people, therefore, could not fail to regard the theoi as Gods, when it was considered the acme of human glory to be numbered among them.

VII. The seventh cause, not so much of the rise as of the progress of Polytheism, was state policy and priest craft. Religion is beneficial in a nation where the government is weak, from the support which it may give to the laws. It may also assist a tyrant to maintain himself on his throne, though it is useless, so far as the interests of this life are concerned, in a well regulated state, where the people are free and equal, the government strong, and no individual placed above the controul of the law.\*

In these early times, states were small ; there was danger, therefore, that the people would concert to-

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\* If there was a state so well regulated, that it was the interest of all men, who regarded their welfare in this life alone to yield obedience to the laws, religion of any kind, would manifestly be more injurious than beneficial to the morals of the people. For if the religionist thought that the good of his future life required that he should obey the laws, his religion would still be of no service to the state because earthly motives alone would be sufficient to induce obedience ; but if he should imagine, (as has frequently been the case,) that the good of his soul or the will of his God, required that the law should be violated, his religion would evidently produce pernicious effects. We may therefore lay it down as a rule, that before the government of a nation, can become perfect, religion among the people must be destroyed, since as the government of the state approaches perfection, religion becomes useless because no aid is required from it, in finding motives for obedience to the laws, and because it is frequently injurious, by furnishing motives for disobedience. Religion is most useful, to a state in maintaining its laws, where there are privileged and subordinate orders, for where part of the people, are made, by the law, inferiour to the rest, the fear of the Gods is necessary to induce obedience.

gether, and overturn the government, if it was such as not enjoyed their entire approbation ; punishment did not so generally overtake the guilty, as in the present days, and the vicious of course did not fear to violate the laws ; legislation was imperfect, and men would not always submit to laws, that were far from being always just ; of agriculture little was known, the poor were therefore driven to robbery and plunder. To prevent these evils, when the rulers saw that the people began to regard the theoi, as intelligent beings, or Gods, quick to wrath, but of an exorable character, they menaced them with the wrath of these irresistible powers, if they attempted to overturn the government, or disobeyed the laws : they affirmed that kings and legislators, were the friends of the Gods, who would severely punish all offences against their favorites.

That these assertions might have the greater effect, they encouraged the priests, whose number they augmented, to increase, by every expedient in their power, the belief of the people in the existence of the Gods, in their care of human affairs, in their hatred of those who neglected their worship, or disobeyed their commands, in the severity of their punishments, and, above all, in their friendship for the rulers of the people.—The priests needed little encouragement. They had already discovered, that by augmenting the belief of the multitude, in these principles, they would make themselves more respected, that they would gain great influence, by being regarded as the intercessors for man, with the superior powers, as directors of men, in the pathes, which are pleasing to the everlasting Gods, and as interpreters of the divine commands.—They therefore hastened to deceive the people, they multiplied tales of miracles, which the Gods had performed, and of punishments which they had inflicted on the disobedient and unbelieving ; they pretended that the Gods had so instructed them, that by consult-

ing certain ceremonies, they could learn the divine will, and foretell future events. And in fact, by delivering obscure and equivocal prophecies, and by foretelling events, which common prudence might foresee, they induced the people to believe that their pretensions were just. The rulers themselves became more pious and prayerful, that the people might take example from their sanctity. They conferred offices and honors on the pious alone; they punished those who blasphemed against the Gods, or despised religion.—The philosophers, wishing to maintain the reputation of good citizens, assisted to spread the delusion. The poets, finding that superstition afforded them a fine machinery, pursued the same course, and all classes of the learned conspired to deceive the ignorant.

We may here observe, that when the people began to believe that there was an order of beings superior to themselves, the causes which led to this belief increased. If festivals were established, and temples erected to the honor of the theoi, the state showed still more respect to the honor of the Gods. If the poets, in their allegories, had introduced the principles of nature, performing miracles, these same things would much more frequently appear in their tales, when they were regarded as inanimate beings. New tales were told, as religion progressed, of the punishments which the Gods had inflicted on mankind, and the belief of the people was therefore increased.

According to this theory, we may easily perceive why the ancients had no God who was the creator of the earth. As the earth could not be produced by the operation of any of the known laws of nature, it could not be regarded as the effect of any of the theoi. Of course when these were changed into Gods, none of them was regarded as the creator of the world.

So much for the causes of the rise of the Greek

**Polytheism.** By them the people were led to believe in the existence of the Gods, and in their influence over the affairs of men. In a few ages, philosophers, poets, statesmen, and priests sprang up, who were not instructed in the secrets of the rise of the religion which they found received by all ranks ; they therefore adopted it as true, and those classes, which were originally deceivers, became deceived.

The people in the beginning believed the existence of the Gods, and the tales which they had heard of the acts of those beings on earth, on the authority of the philosophers and poets. The philosophers asserted that the theoi existed, that they controuled and regulated the affairs of men ; the poets declared that they had appeared on earth, and performed deeds beyond the power of man. The people believed both, but understood, from the causes which I have mentioned, these theoi to be beings of an intellectual nature, a notion which neither the philosopher nor the poet at first entertained. The poets represented the theoi as performing miracles, and the people, believing their accounts, held a miracle to be the sign of a God. In later times, the poets represented the same Gods as conferring this power on man ; the people then believed, that miracles indicated either a God, or a man favored by the Gods. From this originated the plan of proving a religion by miracles.

When Polytheism was once established, the poets far exceeded their predecessors, in the fictions and allegories which they related of the Gods ; they caused these imaginary beings to perform many miracles ; they gave them the passions and imperfections of men, representing them as debauching women, and suffering under the tortures of love. Hence their religion became overloaded with miracles, none of which were supported by sound evidence, being principally related by the poets, for the purpose of pleasing their readers,

or by the priests and politicians, to answer temporary purposes, very few being told for the purpose of supporting their religion. The tales which were told by the poets, of the amours of the Gods, were not well calculated to gain the assent either of the philosophers or the people. These defects finally caused the destruction of their religion, and made room for the establishment of another, supported by miracles performed or related expressly for the proof of its truth.

In later times, the doctrines of the future existence and of the transmigration of the soul, were promulgated. The latter might have arisen, from the fact, that the matter composing the bodies of men, after their death, enters into and forms a part of the bodies of beasts and other men; still there appears to be a deeper system at the bottom of both these doctrines. Among the various systems of the ancients, the soul of man was supposed to be composed of fluid, (probably the electric) the same which formed the soul of the universe. A portion of this, entering into the body of a man at his birth, composed his soul, or animal spirits; as this was a part of the whole body of fluid, composing the soul of the universe, to which it returned at the death of the person in whose body it was contained, it was said to be immortal, and to return to God. But this same fluid, would enter into, and form the soul of some other man, or animal. From this the doctrines of the metempsychosis arises of course.]

I shall close this chapter, by mentioning the principles of nature, or other theoi, from which some of the principal Gods appear to have been derived, and from which their characters were drawn. This list is of course imperfect, for it is impossible for us to discover, at so late a period, the origin of every God which the ancients adored.

Jupiter—Nature, and the electric fluid, confounded.

Juno—Unknown—perhaps the Air.

Apollo—The Sun.

Mercury—Borrowed from the Egyptians:

Mars—War, Valor.

Minerva—Wisdom, Reason, said to be the daughter of Jupiter, for the same reason that Christ was said to be the son of God.

Vulcan—Fire, a blacksmith, from the use of fire in that art.

Venus—Lust.

Cupid—Love.

Saturn—Time, said to destroy his children, because time destroys the things which it produces.

Ceres—The Agricultural art.

Neptune—Water, or the Ocean.

Cybele—The Earth.

Vesta—The Earth.

Vesta—Animal heat.

Pan—Animal and vegetable life.

Hymen—The marriage institution.

Hercules—A Hero.

Bacchus—The inventor of the art of making wine—Wine itself. Or perhaps the Sun.

Eolus—The Wind.

Janus—Prudence.

Pluto—Death. When a person died, he was said to have departed into the region of death or of Pluto. As the dead were buried, these regions were said to be under the earth; as they were conveyed to the burying ground in a boat, the boatman (Charon) was said to convey them to the realms of Pluto. From these expressions, when the soul became immortal,

Pluto became the king of, and Charon the ferryman to, hell, or the regions of death \*

It may perhaps be thought a bold conjecture, to suppose that the electric fluid† was, in part, the ori-

\* As the names of the Gods were originally the names of the theoi, the nature of the things expressed by them, was the sooner misunderstood, by their being used among people of a different tongue. Thus when the Egyptian colonists settled in Greece, they spoke of Pluto, meaning death alone, but were understood by the natives, to mean the king of the dead.

† The more I consider, says Volney, what the ancients understood by ether, and spirit, and what the Indians call akache, the stronger do I find the analogy between it and the electric fluid. A luminous fluid, principle of warmth and motion, pervading the universe, forming the matter of the stars, having small round particles, which insinuate themselves into bodies, fill them by dilating itself, be their extent what it will, what can more strongly resemble electricity.

I have said that the electric fluid, may be regarded as the cause of gravitation, without any breach of philosophical logic. This assertion will require explanation.

There are two systems of electricity, the one supposing that there are two electric fluids, the other that there is only one.— If both these systems account for all electric phenomena, it is immaterial which we adopt, except that the simplest should be preferred: for the use of systems, is to reduce facts to order, so that their dependance on one another, and the relation between them, may be shown in few words, and without confusion. It is not intended by such speculations, to learn the existence of new facts, which cannot be discovered by the senses, but to devise a method, by which what had been learned from experience may be taught with the greatest simplicity. If there can be two systems, which account for all the phenomena connected with them, they should be regarded as equally true, though apparently contradictory. To illustrate my meaning, I would mention, that if there was a system of Astronomy which supposed the earth to be at rest, and yet, by some new law of gravitation, accounted for all the apparent motions of the planets, and stars, it would (all motion being relative) be equally true with that of Copernicus, though the latter would doubtless have the preference in point of simplicity. If the sun was the only heavenly body which we could behold, we might manifestly with equal truth, affirm that the earth turned over, or that the sun went round it, because both assertions would indicate the

ginal of Jupiter. In my opinion, however, this might very probably be the case, for Jupiter, being the chief of the Gods, must either be nature itself, or some principle of nature, which might be regarded as more im-

same relative motion. We might also form systems in Chemistry, which should suppose heat to be the absence of cold, or that heat and cold were two substances, and the system now received would be preferable to these, only by being more simple, and freer from confusion. For these reasons it is immaterial which of the two systems of electricity we prefer, but my purpose lies wholly with that which supposes but one fluid. Doctor Franklin, who adopted this system, supposed that the particles of the fluids, were repelled by one another, and attracted by common matter. From these two laws, he accounted for the attraction of bodies dissimilarly electrified, and for the repulsion of those positively electrified, but we should expect, from the same laws, that bodies electrified negatively, would be attracted, and not repulsed.

The more we exhaust two bodies of the electric fluid, the greater is the repulsion between them. We may therefore suppose, that when they were entirely exhausted of the fluid, this repulsion would be the strongest, or in other words, that bodies of common matter, are repulsed from one another, when destitute of the electric fluid. If we suppose this same repulsion to exist in full force, when the bodies are electrified, in any degree whatever, that when the bodies are attracted, it is only overbalanced by the attraction of the fluid, on the matter of the bodies, and add to this, the two laws adopted by Franklin, the difficulty, which I have mentioned above, in the theory of that great man, will disappear.

If a body, destitute of the electric fluid, should be placed within the influence of its attraction, or should be surrounded by an electrical atmosphere, such a part of this atmosphere, would enter the body, that the repulsion of the fluid within, on that without, would equal the attraction of the body. This is what we call the common state of electricity, for if the body contained more of the fluid, a part of it would fly off, when unopposed by the air, and if it contained less, it would attract more. Let two bodies, of equal magnitude, denoted by A. and B. be brought near each other, and let them be supposed in the common electrical state. Let the attraction of the fluid in A. on the matter of B. equal  $x$ . then would the repulsion in the fluid in B. to the fluid in A. also equal  $x$ . since the repulsion of the fluid in B. must be equal to the attraction of its matter on any fluid without. The attraction of the fluid in B. on the matter of A. would also equal  $x$ . since the bodies are equal and

portant than the others. Such a principle is electricity, for the electric fluid, extending itself through all matter, giving, perhaps, to organic forms their activity, producing other effects, of the greatest importance,

contain equal quantities of the fluid. The attraction thus far is equal  $2x$ . and the repulsion  $=x$ : but to make them equal, we must suppose the repulsion between the bodies themselves to be also  $=x$ .

In the next place, let these bodies be positively electrified, and let  $1+r$  be the ratio of the increase of the fluid in each, then would the repulsion, between the fluids in the two bodies, increase as the square of  $1+r$ ; (it would increase as  $1+r$ , if the fluid in one body only was increased,) and become  $x+2rx+2rx$ . But the attraction of the fluid in such body, on the matter of the other, would increase as  $1+r$ . and become  $2x+2rx$ . The repulsion between the bodies would remain the same. The whole repulsion therefore becomes  $2x+2rx+rx$ , and the whole attraction  $2x+2rx$ , where the repulsion is the greatest by  $2rx$ .

Again, let the two bodies be negatively electrified, and let the fluid in each decrease in the ratio of  $1-r$ . Then will the repulsion of the fluid decrease  $(1-r)$  and become  $x-2rx+2rx$ , and the repulsion of the bodies remaining,  $x$ . the whole would become  $2x-2rx+2rx$ . But the attraction would decrease as  $1-r$ . and become  $2x-2rx$ . Here the repulsion prevails by  $2rx$ .

Let one body be positively electrified, the fluid increasing in the ratio of  $1+r$ . let the fluid in the other decrease as  $1-r$ . then the repulsion of the fluid, being as the product of these, becomes  $x-2rx$ . and the whole repulsion  $2x-2rx$ . But the attraction in one body becoming  $x+rx$ . and in the other  $x-rx$ . the whole amounts to  $2x$ . and is stronger than the repulsion by  $2rx$ .

We should obtain the same result, if we should take the bodies unequal, or if the fluid they contained should increase, or decrease, in unequal ratios. I have supposed above, the attractions and repulsions of the bodies, in the common state, to balance each other, but to account for gravitation, we must make the attraction a little the strongest. For this purpose we must take the repulsion of the bodies, when destitute of the fluid, a little less than  $x$ .

My only purpose has been, to show that this theory might have been adopted by the Egyptians, if they were (as was probably the case) acquainted with electricity, and not to maintain that it is preferable to others. I do not regard it as of great importance, though it does not appear to me inferior to others that have been advanced.

may be considered the soul of the universe, with as great propriety as the breath (spiritus, spirit, from spiro, to breathe,) may be styled the soul of man. It may in fact, without any violation of philosophical logic, be considered the cause of gravitation. It is not strange, therefore, that it should be regarded as the chief of the theoi, and it might be so confounded with nature, that both should form but one God: because philosophers, in different theories, regarded both as the soul of the universe.

If we suppose Jupiter to be nature, or any principle or law of nature, except electricity, we cannot account for the control he has over the thunder, rather than over other natural phenomena. If thunder is the property of Jupiter, exclusively, shall we not regard him as the principle of nature which produces it..

## CHAPTER IV.

### OF THE POLYTHEISM OF THE EGYPTIANS.

IN my short account of the origin of this religion, I shall take Volney for my guide, because, being unacquainted with most of the ancient authors, whose works are connected with this subject, I am illy qualified to add any thing to his speculations. If I have ventured to differ from him, in some instances, they are but few. I should have referred the reader to his work, for all information on this head, if it would not have rendered my own imperfect.

The inhabitants of ancient Egypt, compelled by the annual necessity of surveying their lands, the boundaries of which were swept away by the floods; by their commerce, for which their country was advantageously situated, and by the necessity of foreknowing the time when their country would be inundated, by the overflowing of the Nile, must, at a very early period, have turned their attention to the observation of the stars. They must have soon perceived, that at the approach of the flood, or of any season of the year, the same stars were visible at the same time of the night, that the same stars began to appear, in the eastern horizon, immediately after the setting, or before the rising of the sun. From these facts, the knowledge they derived of the coming of the seasons, was readily obtained.\*

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\* There are three methods by which the coming of any season, may be predicted. First, by observing the number of days

When they had thus observed, that the seasons were always preceded by the appearance of the same star both in the morning and evening, they regarded those stars, as the causes of those seasons, and believed that some produced the overflowing of the river, and others the drought, some the hot seasons, and others the cold. Thus the stars which are in fact destitute of effect, or influence, on the earth, became genii, producers, and theoi, regulators of the affairs of men.

As it is contrary to the inclination of mankind to give arbitrary names where others can be found, the stars would bear the appellation of the season, whose coming their appearance preceded, or of some object connected with it. Thus the stars, or the most conspicuous star, whose appearance preceded the season of ploughing, was called the Bull, or the star of the Bull. To those whose appearance preceded the coming of the lion, the name of stars of the lion, was given. Two bright stars, which appeared at the time of the harvest, were called the husband man and the virgin : to those which appeared before the season of sickness, they gave the name of the scorpion, which, as they asserted, poured his venom upon the earth ; to those which appeared in the midst of the flood, the name of Aquarius, (waterman) Pisces (fish.)

As the stars were regarded as the causes of the variety of the seasons, the Egyptians held festivals, and erected temples to their honor, for the same reason that festivals were held, and temples erected, in honor of the principles of nature, and other theoi ; they also appointed priests, to have the care of their festivals,

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that intervened between its different comings ; secondly, by observing the altitude of the sun at noon, at the time which immediately preceded its arrival ; and thirdly, by observing the stars, which at that time began to appear, in the eastern horizon, before the rising, or after the setting of the sun. The Egyptians appear to have adopted the latter method.

and temples, who in later times, became the priests of their religion.

Prayers were also offered to the stars, to which they had given, for the most part, the name of animals. They prayed the bull, that he would continue his favours; the scorpion, that he would not pour out his venom upon the earth; the lion, that he would not destroy them, not because they supposed that these prayers would be attended with any beneficial effects, but because such is the most natural way for man to express his sense of the benefits, or injuries, which he receives from inanimate, as well as animate objects.—From these causes the stars were soon converted into Gods.\*

As the stars had mostly received the names of animals, the Gods, into which they were converted, received the same appellation. From this cause, those animals on earth, which bore the same names, became Gods themselves, all other animals, and even vegetables, received the divine nature, through analogy.—Hence in Egypt, every orchard was overrun with Gods.† As the animals on earth are ever at war with

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\* M. Volney thinks that about 17000 years have elapsed, since the rise of this religion, but his opinion is founded on the supposition that the stars, would take the name of objects, connected with those seasons of the year, in which they began to appear in the east, before the rising of the sun, that is of those seasons in which they were in conjunction with the sun. It is however, more reasonable to suppose, that they took their names, from those seasons, in which they were in opposition to it, or in which they began to appear in the evening, for the evening is the time in which men more generally view the stars, this would shorten the time, since its rise to about 7000 years.

† Of those species of animals, whose flesh was used for food, but one selected individual, was considered a God, because it would not have been politic, to have made the whole species sacred. For this reason only one bull (Apis) was worshipped. But the whole of those species, which were useful to man only in their life, were regarded as divine, such was the case with the dog and the cat.

each other, one species destroying others for its food, these same contentions and hostilities were introduced among the animal Gods. The God Lion was opposed to the God Bear; the God Ichneumon to the God Crocodile. Poets related tales of their battles, and the world became full of traditions concerning the wars of the superiour powers.

When a planet, in its wanderings, entered a constellation of stars, these were understood from an ambiguity\* of language, to have mingled in love. From this circumstance, arose tales concerning the loves of the Gods.

The stars, whose appearance preceded, and which were regarded as the *causes* of disagreeable or unhealthy seasons, when they became Gods, were considered as malevolent beings; these Gods which derived their names, and existence, from those animals which are hostile to man, bore the same character; while the other divinities were regarded as the friends of the human race. From this arose the doctrine of the two principles of good and evil.

This religion has had some effect on that of the Christians, who have borrowed many of their traditions from it. I shall end this chapter with an account of some of these.

It is asserted in the scriptures, "that in the beginning, a man and woman, by their fall, brought sin and death into the world." By this was denoted, the astronomical fall of the celestial virgin, and the herdsman, Bootes, which, setting heliacly at the autumnal equinox, resigned the heavens to the wintry constellations, and seemed, in sinking below the horizon, to in-

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\* *Intravit in eam, he went in unto her.* This phrase was anciently used to relate the amours of men, as well as the entrance of a planet, into a constellation.

introduce into the world the Genius of evil Ahrimanes, represented by the constellation of the serpent.

"That the woman decoyed and seduced the man."

And in reality, the virgin first sinks below the horizon, and appears to draw the man after her.

"That the woman tempted him, by offering him fruit pleasant to the sight, and good for food, which gave the knowledge of good and evil."

Manifestly alluding to the virgin, who is depicted holding a branch of fruit (emblem of Autumn) in the hand, which she appears to extend towards the herdsman.

"That this couple were driven from the celestial garden, and that a cherub, with a flaming sword, was placed at the gate to guard it."

When the virgin and the herdsman sink below the western horizon, Perseus rises on the opposite side of the heavens, and sword in hand, may be said to drive them from the summer hemisphere, the garden, and reign of fruits and flowers.

"That a virgin should conceive, and bring forth a son, that should crush the serpent's head, and deliver the world from sin."

By this child was denoted the sun, which at the period of the summer solstice, at the precise moment that the Persian Magi drew the horoscope of the new year, found itself in the bosom of the virgin, and which, on this account, was represented, in their astrological pictures, in the form of an infant, suckled by a chaste virgin and afterwards became, at the vernal equinox, the Ram, or Lamb, conqueror over the constellation of the serpent, which disappeared from the heavens.

"That this virgin was espoused to a husband, who, nevertheless, knew her not."

By this husband was meant the constellation of Bootes, the herdsman, which being in the vicinity of, and rising at the same time with, the celestial virgin, may be said to be married to her, but not to know her, because the distance between them is always the same.

“That the child of this virgin, the saviour of mankind, and the restorer of the celestial nature, in the beginning led a mean, obscure, and indignant life.”

By this was meant, that the winter sun was humbled, depressed below the horizon, that this first period of his four ages, or seasons, was a period of obscurity and indigence, of fasting and privation.

“That being put to death by the wicked, he gloriously rose again, ascended from hell into heaven, where he will reign forever.”

By these expressions was described the life of the same sun, who terminating his career at the winter solstice, when Typhon, and the rebellious angels, exercised their sway, seemed to be put to death by them, but shortly after revived, and rose again in the firmament.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF THE SUBSEQUENT CHANGES OF RELIGION.

At the time when Polytheism began generally to prevail, the Theists and Pantheists were scattered among the nations which received it. Some of these admitted that there might be many Gods. The Theist believed that, though he had no reason to suppose that more than one God was engaged in the creation of the world, there might be others, who had no part in that work. The Pantheist divided his God into many, and supposed that instead of being governed by one soul alone, the universe might be governed by the souls of its parts, believing, however, that there ~~was one~~ supreme power, that ruled over these. Yet there were many of both sects, that boldly rejected the additional Gods, and uniting, because they agreed in the point which formed the dispute between them and their common enemies, formed a religion of their own. This religion, however, derived its activity, as well as many of its tenets, from that of the Polytheists.

Before the existence of any other religion, men regarded the question, whether the doctrines of the Theist, and Pantheist, were true or false, as one in which they had little or no concern; for it was not supposed that God, if he existed, concerned himself with the affairs of men, except by the immutable laws which he had established. Some might, perhaps, affirm, that God would be driven to wrath, by the ingratitude of man, and appeased by prayer and adoration, but

these assertions would, by most men, be regarded as the dreams of disordered brains. If worship and prayer have any beneficial effect, it could not be known to those who possessed no religion, except that which might be derived from the contemplation of nature.— Experience would teach them, that the course of nature continued the same, whether prayers were or were not addressed to God, that the sun shined, and the rain fell, on those who prayed not, as well as those who prayed. Philosophy would teach them, that as God has a full knowledge of all our wants, and of every thing which would contribute to our happiness, the whole, if consistent with his purposes, would be granted without any petition from us, and refused if not. whatever might be our prayers and supplications.

Nor would it be supposed, that the worship of God could procure us any favor from that holy being. Nature affords us no reason for believing that God desires our worship, and if it should be granted that he does, he hath power to obtain it, without rewarding those who comply with his will, or punishing those who refuse. It is true that we have no proof, that worship, and prayer do not produce beneficial effects, but it is equally true that we cannot prove that they do. Without the aid of revelation, we could not even know that their effects were not injurious.

But the Polytheists, as soon as their religion began to exist, (owing to the cause that gave it birth,) believed that the Gods took great interest in the affairs of men. As their Gods were no more than the principles of nature, on which depended the condition of the human race, mistaken, from the tales which were related concerning them, for beings of an intellectual nature, the people could not suppose that human affairs were never affected by their influence. The Theist and Pantheist believed that their God governed the world by the laws of nature, which depended on his will, from which he did not often, if ever, deviate.

since he had so contrived them from the beginning, that they should produce the state of things which he desired. The Polytheists, believing that the world was governed by many Gods, could not suppose that they had thus adapted the laws of nature to their designs. As they concluded from the traditions that were related, that these Gods were influenced by passions, like those of men, they supposed that their favors might be won by prayer and adoration. This opinion at first arose from the prayers addressed to their theoi, without any expectation of beneficial effects, and increased by subsequent causes. The Theists suppose that their God punished man only by the operation of the laws of nature. They therefore sought his favor by that virtue which we denominate prudence. The Polytheists, influenced in their belief, by the tales of the priests and politicians, supposed that his Gods punished those who offended, in the manner of human rulers; he therefore sought their favor by prayer, sacrifice, and by obedience to the government, which he supposed was supported by the will of the celestial powers.

When the Theists and the Pantheists separated from the Polytheists, they borrowed from the latter, their notions of the concern which the divine powers take in the affairs of men, and of the worship and adoration which they require. They began to teach that God granted man no favors, except in consequence of prayer, that he severely punished those who disbelieved his existence, refused to obey his commands, or to worship and adore him, in a manner appropriate to his power and holiness. Hence arose a religion well calculated, so far as its tenets were believed, to curb the multitude, when in the hands of the rulers, and to excite seditions when in the hands of the factious.

Those Theists, who dwelled in nations governed by Polytheistical rulers, soon found that people of such discordant opinions, could not join in peace. They therefore attempted, by revolutions, to change the

government, and bring the power of the nation into their own hands ; where this could be effected, they repaid on their adversaries. the evils which they had suffered ; where it could not, they flocked together in great numbers, and forsaking their native land, sought in regions which their swords might win. an assylum for their opinions. Their rulers, to encourage them, under the hardships and privations which they were forced to endure, affirmed that God was on their side, and that he would deliver them from their enemies.— To maintain their own authority, they asserted that it was derived from the divine power, and that the same power would inflict the severest punishment on the disobedient. The slightest good fortune, they considered, or pretended to consider, as the immediate interposition of heaven in their favor ; if they met with any disaster, some sin had been committed, at which the Lord was displeased, they sought for the offender, and as crimes are every day committed in a large and ill-governed multitude, the wrath of heaven was never without a cause. If they found any difficulty, in crossing rivers, lakes, or seas, when they had overcome it, and effected a passage, they affirmed that God had granted them his assistance. They marched into deserts, through which they were obliged to pass, they found wild fruits, manna, birds and beasts, suitable for food ; they affirmed that God had sent them there, that they might not suffer for the want of meat ; they overcame their enemies in battle, they attributed their success to the assistance of heaven. In the traditions of later times, these favors were magnified into miracles. It was asserted that the sea had opened, to give them a passage, standing above them, on each side, as they passed, and that returning, it had swallowed up their enemies, who ventured\* to pursue them ; that

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\* The infatuation of the Egyptians, in venturing to pursue the Israelites, under the circumstances mentioned in the scriptures, was a greater miracle, than the opening of the waters.

man had fallen for their food, on every day except the Sabbath, that the walls of cities had fallen down before them, and that the sun and moon had stood still at their command.

But a religion, which taught that men were rewarded for their piety, and punished for their wickedness, in this life alone, could not long have the effect which the priests, and those rulers who made religion an instrument of government, desired. When the people saw that the infidel, who disbelieved the existence of God, and openly reviled religion, prospered as well, and enjoyed the favor of heaven as highly,\* as those who were given to prayer and adoration, they could not place great confidence in the tales which were related by their spiritual teachers. To remedy this defect, the doctrine of a future life, where men might be rewarded for their virtues, and punished for their vices, was contrived and promulgated. By this doctrine an advantage over the infidel, was given to the pious, of which they could never be robbed by experience. They indeed found some difficulty, when asked to prove the truth of their hypothesis, but they passed it over, by demanding that their enemies should prove it false, if it was not true. With this the votaries of their opinion were satisfied. They communicated their doctrines to the people, who required no proof, the rulers accepted it, as favorable to their purposes, and death and hell, soon became the penalty of doubt.

When this opinion had been promulgated through, and received by most of the nations of the earth, the Almighty God, being pleased with it, for some reason, with which we are unacquainted, saw fit to confirm it, by a special mission of his son. That son at the same time taught us the means of obtaining happiness in the

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\* Those rulers, who supposed that religion was favorable to their political designs, took care that this should be the case with few of their infidel subjects.

future life, and the conduct that would be punished therein. The old religions of the earth were destroyed by this mission, and a new one established, which, as it possesses the genius of adapting its tenets to all times and places, bids fair to triumph over all opposition, to run through all nations, to crush its foes in its course, and to be gathered to its fathers in a good old age. The votaries of this religion have already gained many victories over paganism and infidelity, when the superiority, both of reason and numbers, was on the side of its foes ; they have raised themselves from weakness to power, and inflicted on their enemies a tenfold vengeance, for the evils which they were forced to endure in the infancy of their sect.

Candor and justice, however, oblige me to acknowledge, that the Polytheism of the Greeks and Romans, was much more beneficial, or rather less injurious, to morals, than the religion of the christians. It is the doctrine of the latter, that a regeneration is necessary to salvation, without which morality can be of no avail. This religion, therefore, affords no motive for virtue to the unregenerated. That the punishment of the guilty is not in proportion to their guilt, but that all who are punished, are punished equally ; hence those who fear that their sins cannot be forgiven, do not fear to add to their crimes. The religion of the Greeks and Romans, on the contrary, taught that to obtain happiness in a future life, nothing was necessary but good morals, and a respect for the Gods ; it also taught that the greater the guilt, the greater the punishment, and the greater the virtue, the greater the happiness of departed souls ; hence the motives for virtue, which men derived from this religion, extended to all.

It will perhaps be inferred from these remarks, that the world profited not, by the change of its religion. But this is an error ; its gain was infinite. Christianity was given us, not for this life, but for that of the  
 "LIFE TO COME."







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